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FULL REVIEWS

FEATURE
2DIE FOR
Is it the end of the road for 2D gaming?

180 PAGES FULL OF EASTERN PROMISE

REVIEW
ADVANCE WARS 2
Nintendo proves that size matters not

PREVIEWED
PRINCE OF PERSIA
Lara who? Jordan Mechner's classic platform adventure makes a stunning return to form

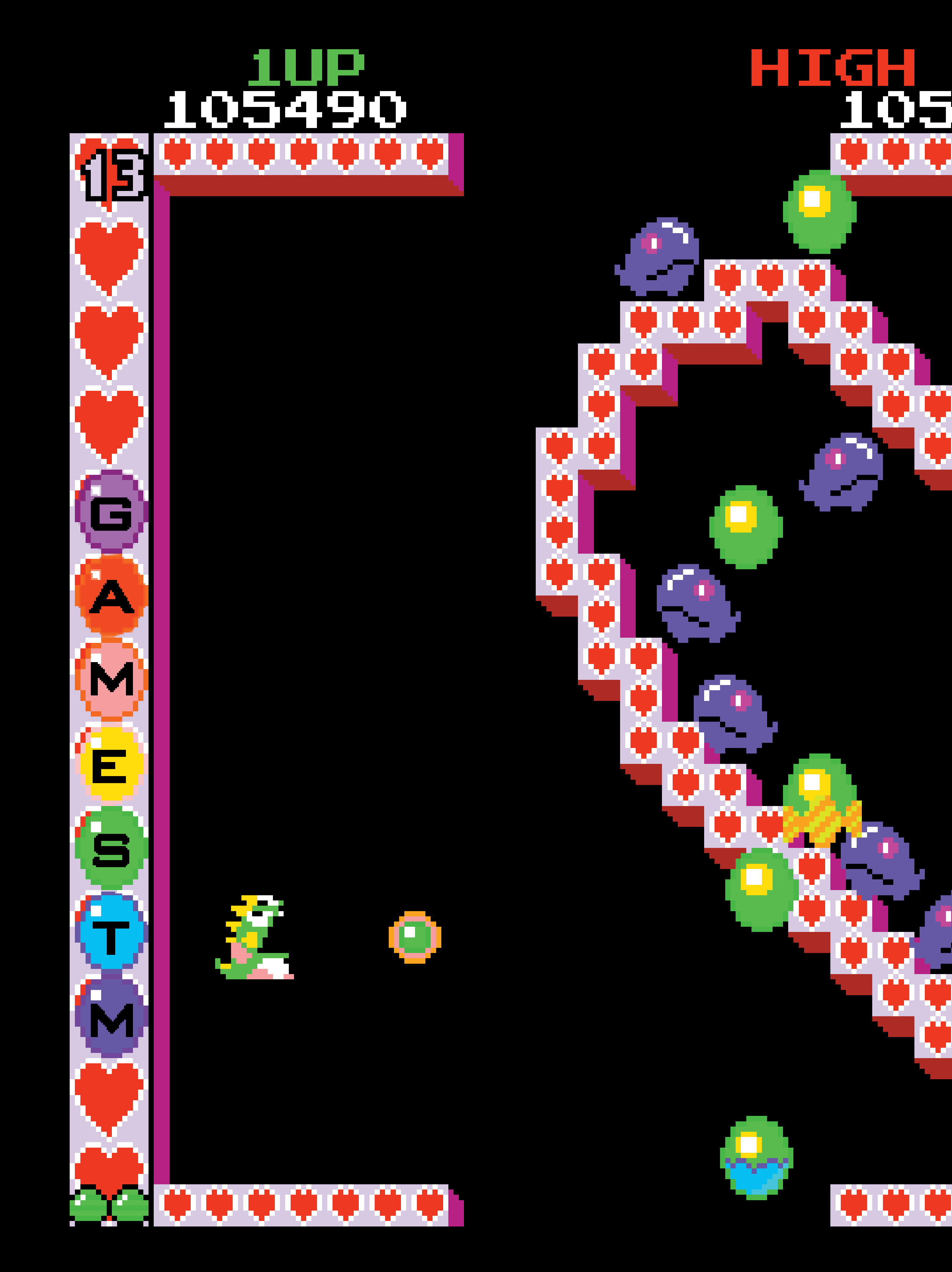

eMag

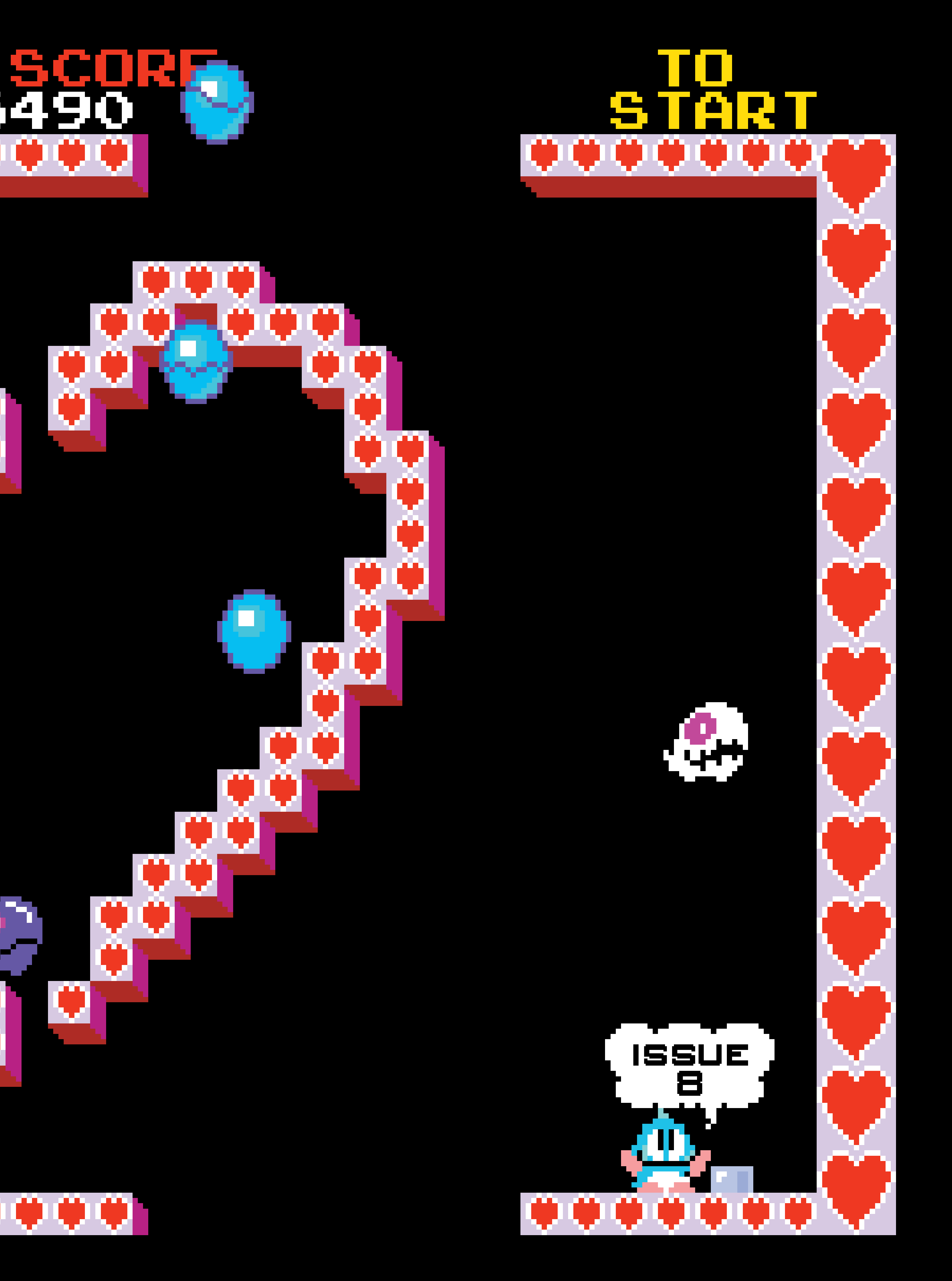
It's not possible to avoid the over-used cliché regarding the summer drought of videogames. Some mags will look to the winter months for solace, others will champion a specific preview – essentially, these are thinly veiled attempts at trying to avoid saying that if you like videogames then the summer is pump. It's a simple fact, but if you've been reading **games™** for a while you should know that that we genuinely try to champion gaming, whether it's the games themselves or the people behind them. But right now, slap in the middle of 'the drought', there's very little to get excited about.

Thankfully, there is hope, and if you're prepared to risk being unloved by Nintendo we'd like to recommend a little something on import, namely *Advance Wars 2* for the GBA. It might be another sequel but it's also a game that deserves a moment of everyone's time. Best of all, you can bask in those rays and play a superb game at the same time. What better compromise?

Simon Phillips, Group Editor




1UP
105490
HIGH
105
13
G
A
M
E
S
T
M


SCORE
490
TO
START
ISSUE
8

CONTENTS


111


120


It's not the size of your battalion, it's what you do with it that counts. *Advance Wars 2*, page 100

100

FEATURES

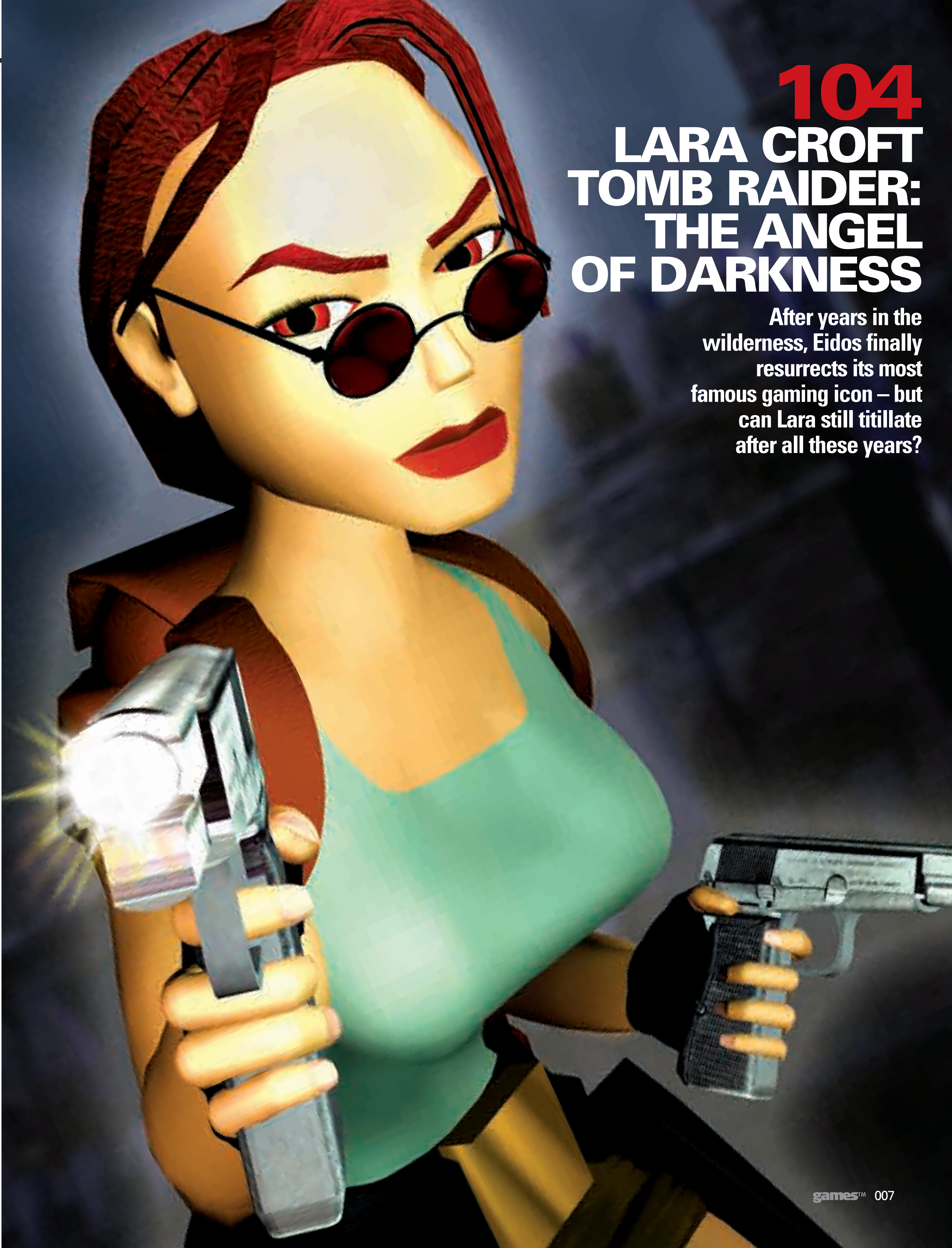
RETRO GAMING

They might be long in the tooth, but they still delight. Old-school games at their very best.

PREVIEWS 48

REVIEWS 98

REGULARS



104 LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

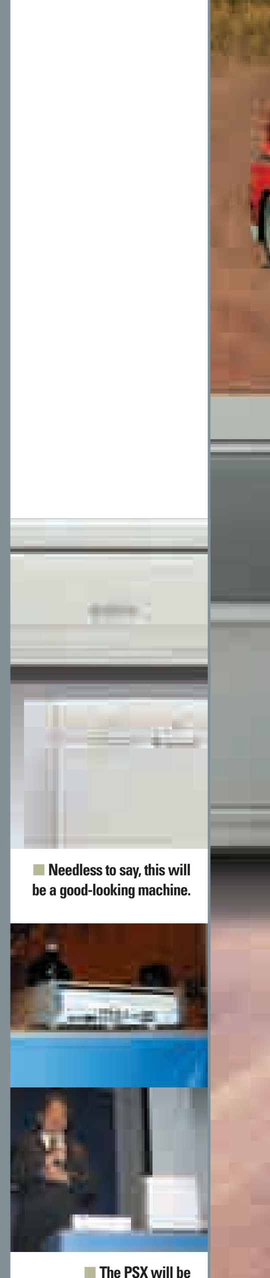
After years in the wilderness, Eidos finally resurrects its most famous gaming icon – but can Lara still titillate after all these years?

NEWS

NEWS | **INDUSTRY GOSSIP** | OPINION

CONTENTS

FIND OUT WHERE TO GET THE ESSENTIAL STORIES WITH OUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE NEWS



Needless to say, this will be a good-looking machine.

The PSX will be 'extraordinary', apparently.



X MARKS THE SPOT

GAMES™ TAKES A LOOK AT SONY'S NEW SUPER CONSOLE – WILL IT RULE THEM ALL?



The 'X' in PSX refers to the crossover of games and electronics," explained Ken Kutaragi at the unveiling of Sony's PSX, "but it also stands for 'extraordinary'."

Of course, this is hyperbole taken to the extreme – after all, this is the same man who stated that using a PlayStation2 would be like "plugging into the Matrix". However, it's also something that not only marks a potentially massive change of direction for Sony, but will also give its competitors some serious food for thought.

Sony's PSX will be available in Japan before the end of the year and should launch in Europe and North America during 2004; it's yet to be revealed if it will receive a simultaneous release with the PSP.

As we reported last issue, Sony's PSX will include a TV tuner, DVD recorder, 120GB hard drive and Internet access (broadband only), as well as everything you would expect to find in a normal PlayStation2.

Looking extremely slick in its silver, streamlined casing, the PSX's controllers will plug into the rear of the machine, meaning that the front



of Sony's new machine looks like one of its top-end DVD players. Sony's memory sticks will make the need for memory cards redundant, and the end result is a highly desirable-looking machine that Sony hopes will fulfil the same sort of role as a Microsoft PC. "The PSX will be more than just PS2 compatible," claims Kutaragi-san. "I think it has the power to change the way you see all digital appliances."

Another purpose of the PSX will be to inject some much-needed interest back into Sony's consumer electronic division. Sony's videogame division completely outstrips the rest of its consumer section and it comes as no surprise that the PSX has been announced following the largest drop in profits in the last eight years for the rest of Sony's consumer division.

No prices have so far been announced for the new system, although Kutaragi-san has made it clear that because Sony is producing most of its semi-conductors used in the PSX for PS2, the end price will be comparably cheaper than similar set-top boxes and will still turn a profit. Sony's pushing of the PSX and PSP may lead some to believe that this could mark the possible end for the PS2, but as far as we're concerned the two machines will appeal to vastly different audiences (especially as the PSX is more than likely to be marketed towards a more mature user with a higher income).

Time will tell, however, and in the meantime, we'll be earnestly waiting for more details on Sony's exciting new piece of hardware.



Nintendo is unlikely to be fazed by the PSX.



Microsoft may have designs on the same market.



Broadcast.com doesn't have the clout of Microsoft.

IT'S YOUR MOVE

Now that Sony has revealed all about its latest hardware plans, it's time to see how the PSX will affect its competitors

NINTENDO

Sony's PSX shouldn't affect Nintendo's future plans in the slightest. Nintendo has always made games machines first and foremost, and although Matsushita's Q offered the inclusion of DVD playback (and an extremely high price to match), we feel that it's unlikely that Nintendo will follow the same route as its peers. Like its stance on online gaming, Nintendo always seems content to sit back and watch from the sidelines, rather than throw its money away on an unproven product. While some would say that after the GameCube's poor performance it may be beneficial for Nintendo to throw caution to the wind, we feel confident that it will concentrate on its next console and continue to build upon its solid fan base.

MICROSOFT

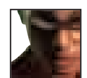
You've got to laugh at the irony of the situation Microsoft now finds itself in – after fears that its hotly rumoured HomeStation would be dismissed as nothing more than a blatant attempt to get PCs into the living room, Microsoft cancels its project, only to find that Sony has produced a near identical machine. We feel it's highly unlikely that Microsoft will take this latest announcement sitting down, and considering that the PSX is extremely similar to its own HomeStation idea, we think it's highly probable that Microsoft will resurrect the once-shelved project. Of course, if the HomeStation (or something similar) does appear, Microsoft will have to close the gap that Sony will be attempting to create as quickly as possible – they certainly won't want another situation like the Xbox and PlayStation2. After all, in this sort of competition there's no prize for second place…

BROADCAST.COM

The PSX's first rival will come courtesy of Broadcast.com's set-top PC which is rumoured to hit the shelves as early as December. Although the machine has yet to be given an official name, it is said to include a 600MHz processor, 27GB hard disk, ethernet card, a high-definition television decoder TV tuner card, video in and out ports and a DVD-ROM drive. Basic models will start at $1,899 (around £1,139) with Broadcast.com's chairman, Mark Cuban, stating that this is the way forward. "The war for broadband will be fought in your living room," he explains. "What we are trying to do is get people to change their attitude about what a PC is." Despite Cuban's claims, we can't help but feel that only Microsoft will have the drive (and the practically limitless funds) to go up against the PSX. Broadcast.com's high price tag could also prove to be a problem for its new machine. Although Sony has yet to commit to a price for the PSX, we find it hard to believe that it will be in the same bracket as Cuban's machine.

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



TIME FOR ANOTHER PILL

After the incredible success of Atari's woeful *Enter The Matrix*, it's been revealed that Shiny will be developing two games based on the franchise that will be released at Christmas 2004 and 2006. Atari has denied that a new game will be released to coincide with November's *Matrix Revolutions* – current rumours hint at a possible special edition re-release of *Enter The Matrix* instead. We're hoping this shocking rumour will be just that, but with *ETM* hogging the top of the charts for the first four weeks of its release, anything's possible.



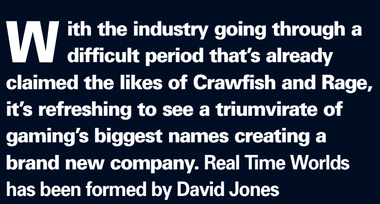
GOOD NEWS FOR SHENMUE FANS?

Yu Suzuki, president of SEGA-AM2, recently hosted a question and answer session on the company's website. When asked if *Shenmue III* was in the works, Suzuki-san revealed that he was not content with stopping at *Shenmue II*. Of course, this isn't a firm confirmation, but it's clear that Suzuki-san doesn't want his beloved series to die just yet. He also revealed that the fans' opinions weighed very heavily on any decisions to develop certain games.



THREE OF THE INDUSTRY'S HEAVYWEIGHTS FORM A NEW COMPANY IN SCOTLAND

WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD



Can the success of *Lemmings* be replicated?

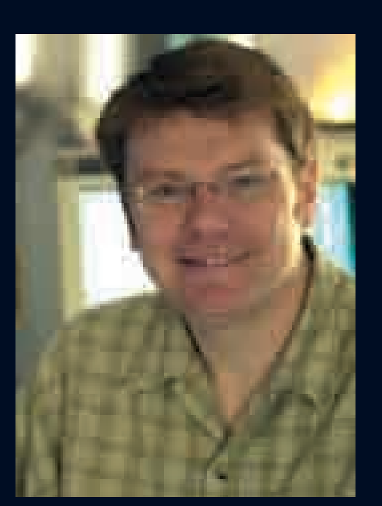
With the industry going through a difficult period that's already claimed the likes of Crawfish and Rage, it's refreshing to see a triumvirate of gaming's biggest names creating a brand new company. Real Time Worlds has been formed by David Jones (*Lemmings*, *Grand Theft Auto*), Ian Hetherington (founder of Psygnosis and former managing director of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe) and Tony Harmen (former director of development and acquisition at Nintendo of America), and promises to put Scotland on the gaming map.

"Real Time Worlds was initially formed when some people who had worked together at DMA Design for many years decided to make a smaller studio," explains Jones. "This studio was to have a long-term plan on the kind of game it would make, and only recruit talented staff with strong experience in making games.

"Bringing Ian and Tony on board follows my philosophy of only working with the best," continues Jones. "My goal is to create unique global franchises and maximise the revenue potential from those titles. We have put together a hand-picked team of 28 developers with a tremendous portfolio of hit games behind them, and now we have a similar pedigree in our management team."

With the creator of *Grand Theft Auto* at the reins you'd expect a similar project to be up and running, and judging by the sound of it gamers shouldn't be too disappointed. "We are not yet talking specifically about our two titles under development, but I will hint that fans of *GTA* and next-generation racing games will not be disappointed," explains Hetherington. "Having seen literally thousands of games in the past, I was amazed at the unique and groundbreaking ideas that are being brought to life at Real Time Worlds."

One of the biggest projects with which Real Time Worlds is involved is online



"WE HAVE PUT TOGETHER A HAND-PICKED TEAM OF 28 DEVELOPERS WITH A TREMENDOUS PORTFOLIO OF HIT GAMES BEHIND THEN, AND NOW WE HAVE A SIMILAR PEDIGREE IN OUR MANAGEMENT TEAM"

DAVID JONES



■ Fans of the *Grand Theft Auto* series should be pleased with Real Time Worlds' first game, or so we're told.



■ The massive multiformat success of *Lemmings* bodes well for future Real Time Worlds titles.

gaming. "We're very interested in the online console market," reveals Jones. "All of our work has a strong online component, and this is an area we are excited about and believe has massive scope for innovative new ways to play. It's very much a new world, one which we believe will offer a fresh injection of originality into gaming. Our main aim is to create some waves in online gaming, and keep looking to be fresh in the games we produce."

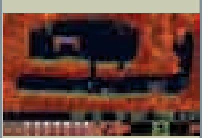
At games™, we've always felt that taking the *GTA* series online would be the next logical step (are you listening, Rockstar?) and it seems that David Jones could be planning a similar project. "*GTA* is an established franchise now," he explains. "It has core values and a solid design that can be embellished down the line. Our plans are for a couple of new games that have similar design principles, but with a different focus. We have to think about where we will be in five years, what we want to play, and how we will be playing. It's like the evolution of *GTA1* to *GTA3*, but the online space makes for very different possibilities."

Regardless of what direction Real Time Worlds takes, it's quite obvious that it intends to make a bold mark on the games industry. David Jones was unwilling to reveal any details about the two games apart from that they were "very different, and online is a big part of them". However it has been revealed that the games' publishers will shortly be announced. Whatever happens, let's just hope that Real Time Worlds makes good on its promises and delivers new and exciting gaming experiences.

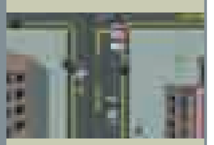
SO, WHY ALL THE FUSS?

What's so important about another new developer starting up then? Well, if you needed any further convincing of Real Time World's pedigree, take a look at this little lot.

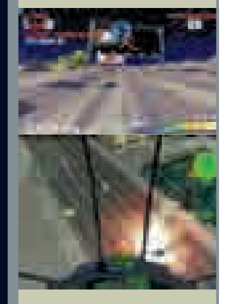
Lemmings
Created for practically every console and computer ever made, David Jones' *Lemmings* was an incredible success that still plays well today. While simple in execution – guide your Lemmings to an exit whilst avoiding the level's many hazards – the incredible design of each level meant that you'd be glued to your TV or monitor for what seemed like an eternity.



Grand Theft Auto
Even if you took away all the gore, violence and bad language, you'd still be left with an amazingly solid game. The free-roaming design and huge, sprawling city meant that the original *Grand Theft Auto* was just as much a classic as its later 3D incarnations.



Psygnosis
When Ian Hetherington formed Psygnosis in 1984 little did he realise what was in store for the Liverpool-based company. Thanks to games like *Shadow Of The Beast* and *Barbarian* and the worldwide success of *Lemmings*, Psygnosis was eventually acquired by Sony and went on to make the likes of *Wipeout* and *G Police*.





MOVE OVER ECTS, YOU'VE GOT A RIVAL

EDINBURGH GETS READY TO HOST ITS FIRST GAMES FESTIVAL

Not content with its many famous film, stand-up comedy and classical music festivals, it seems that Edinburgh will now be showing the same respect to videogames.

The Edinburgh International Games Festival (EIGF) will finally see computer and videogames take their place alongside the more traditional arts. Running from 11-18 August, the EIGF will consist of an eight day public exhibition in the Royal Museum of Scotland and a one-day conference for members of the industry and any other interested parties at Edinburgh's International Conference Centre.

This new event is being managed by a committee representing many areas of the industry and will consist of publishers, developers and two industry trade bodies – the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association (ELSPA) and The Interactive Game Developer Association (TIGA). Tom Stone, worldwide managing director for Lego Interactive, will chair the actual committee.

"This festival will be a celebration of the art form of videogames," said Stone. "It will expose the heart and soul of what we do – make compelling interactive experiences that are enjoyed by millions. The event will focus on the quality of our industry's product and is designed to encourage debate about games in the same way as film, TV and literature are widely discussed."

After the poor attempts to bring our much-loved pastime to the masses via the medium of TV, we're very excited about this latest development – it's further proof that gaming is finally starting to become 'acceptable'.



BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



STICKS AND STONES

Considering that Nokia doesn't consider itself in competition with Nintendo, that hasn't stopped its head of entertainment, Ilkka Raiskinen, having a go at the GBA. "Game Boy is for 10-year olds," he revealed in a recent Dow Jones business report. "If you're 20 or 25 years old, it's probably not a good idea to draw a Game Boy out of your pocket on a Friday night in a public place." Nintendo has always stated that it's "unthreatened" by Nokia's N-Gage, but it will be interesting to see how it reacts to Raiskinen's comments.



THE DREAM IS OVER

It had to happen – SEGA has closed down the Dreamcast's servers. Despite a slow start, SEGA's online service boomed with the arrival of *Phantasy Star Online*, so as a courtesy to the game's fans *PSO* and its sequel will still be playable even though the servers closed at the end of June. SEGA left this statement on the server: "We hope you enjoyed our online gaming services that were extended six months beyond the original shutdown date. Thank you for supporting Dreamcast online gaming." Thank *you*.





GAMECUBE IN ONLINE SHOCK

THE GAMECUBE IS FINALLY GETTING READY TO GO ONLINE (ALTHOUGH IT'S NO THANKS TO NINTENDO)

With the success of Xbox Live and the recent launch of Sony's online service, it now looks like GameCube owners can get connected too. GameSpy has revealed it's working on middleware tools that will allow developers to take GameCube games online. GameSpy's president, Jon Epstein, already has high hopes. "We feel that multiplayer online gaming adds a considerable new dimension in gameplay for any platform," he said. "We think it's very important for all next-generation systems to offer these capabilities. If there's proven demand from gamers for multiplayer gaming on the GameCube, more publishers will react and provide them with those games."

With the likes of Activision already using GameSpy's tools for the *Tony Hawk* series, it will be interesting to see just how much use the new middleware will receive. "We'll offer a set of middleware tools which allow developers and publishers to easily enable the functions needed to have an online game," says Epstein. "Different developers might implement various parts of our offering, or all of it, and there's flexibility in how they design it."

Surprisingly, Gamespy is not the only company to produce online middleware for Nintendo developers; Access Corp Ltd is also planning to make its NetFront Internet software available. Access is already being used as the middleware provider for SEGA's *Phantasy Star Online Episode 3: Card Battle* and Konami's *Power Pro Stadium 10* (a Japanese baseball game) so it will be interesting to see if any competition arises between the two companies.

Even with the interest in online gaming increasing at the moment, Epstein does not feel that Nintendo made the wrong choice by not going online yet. "Nintendo customers are different from those of the Sony and Microsoft platforms," he says. "I think it's way too early to tell who is on the right or the best path."

As exciting as all this sounds, it's important to remember that if Nintendo isn't interested in the middleware tools we're not going to get the opportunity to play the likes of *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* or *Pikmin 2* online any time soon. With GameSpy hoping to have its software ready within a few months and Access's tools also imminent, let's hope the results will make Nintendo change its mind.

BIGGER IS BETTER

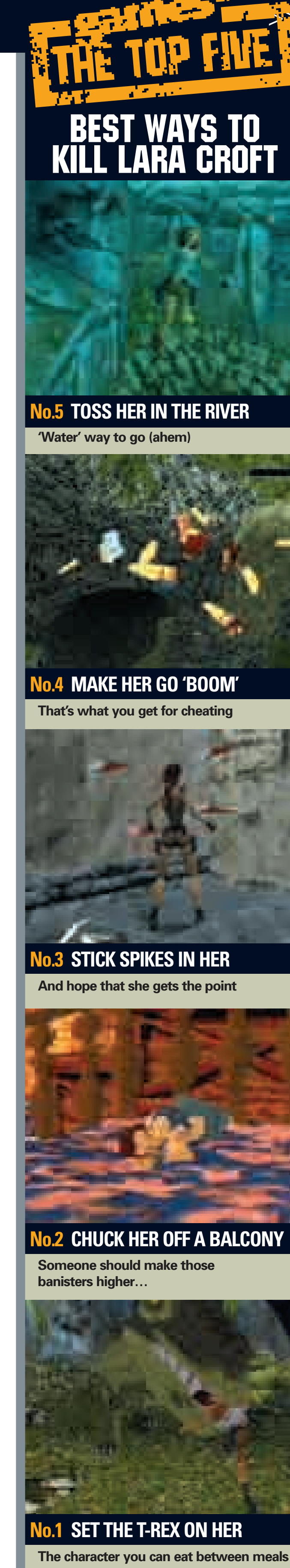
SEVERAL COMPANIES RETURN TO ECTS, BUT WHERE'S NINTENDO?

After last year's rather lacklustre turnout, the European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) has announced a more impressive turnout for this year's event. Microsoft, Ubi Soft, SEGA, Codemasters, THQ, Nokia, Konami, NVIDIA and Intel are just are few of the big hitters to be mentioned, with many more yet to be announced. Sony is also returning and will display an even larger Playstation Experience than last year's, and if that wasn't enough, the whole ECTS experience will tie in with London's Games Week – an initiative to raise the profile of the interactive industry within the media.

Considering its need to push the GameCube, Nintendo has yet to announce whether it will be appearing at the show (last year it held a breakfast conference in a nearby hotel). This isn't the only event to suffer – Nintendo's Spaceworld (normally held annually in Japan) has been cancelled for the second year running. Being far from impressed with Nintendo's E3 offerings, we were expecting to hear very big announcements at Spaceworld instead. Unless Nintendo will be revealing something spectacular at this year's Tokyo Games Show (*Mario 128* or *Metroid Prime 2* would be nice) it appears that we've seen everything it has to offer. Still, with a number of strong first- and second-party titles lined up for the end of the year (including *F-Zero GX*, *Billy Hatcher* and *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*) at least Christmas will have a much stronger line-up.



Most of the big name firms are expected at ECTS this year.



BEST WAYS TO KILL LARA CROFT

No.5 TOSS HER IN THE RIVER
'Water' way to go (ahem)

No.4 MAKE HER GO 'BOOM'
That's what you get for cheating

No.3 STICK SPIKES IN HER
And hope that she gets the point

No.2 CHUCK HER OFF A BALCONY
Someone should make those banisters higher…

No.1 SET THE T-REX ON HER
The character you can eat between meals



THE FARCE IS STRONG IN THIS ONE

STAR WARS GALAXIES ISN'T GOING TO BE CHEAP…

As the launch of *Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided* gets ever closer (at least in the US), LucasArts has finally revealed its subscription service for the hotly anticipated title. There will be four options available, with prices will varying from $14.99 (£9) for a month-to-month subscription, to $12.00 (£7) a month for 12 months. The actual game itself will retail at $49.95 (£30) and include a free 30-day subscription; otherwise you can pick up a special collector's edition complete with a book of in-game art, pewter figurine, in-game wearables, lapel pin and patch, and a signed manual for $75.95 (£47).

"The release of *Star Wars Galaxies* is a truly defining moment for LucasArts and we're confident the game will meet players' expectations," said Simon Jeffery, president of LucasArts. "The current subscription plan is reflective of the game's high quality and competitive with the current market. No matter which subscription offer players choose they'll be able to look forward to a constant stream of dynamic content and features, first-rate customer service and much, much more."

Although there's been no official statement for UK pricing, we're hoping that it's not going to be a simple case of swapping the dollar and pound signs, although we feel that even £9 a month is a lot to pay when you've already spent £30 on the game itself…

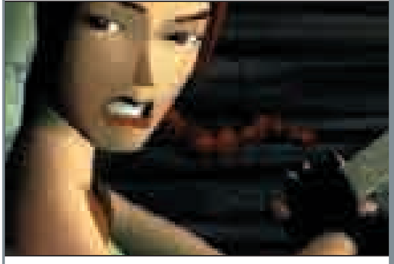
Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



EVERYONE LOVES LARA

A recent survey by GameVision has revealed that Lara Croft is the most recognised games brand across Europe. No doubt thanks to the clever marketing her games have constantly received and 2001's movie, nearly 90 per cent of gamers are aware of the character and over 80 per cent are aware of the games. We find it hard to believe that people would rate Lara over Sonic and the almighty Mario, even with the recent release of *Angel Of Darkness*. Still, we bet the money men at Eidos will be rubbing their hands together.





KONAMI SIGNS KUJU

Konami will be joining forces with UK developer Kuju for a new original title. "We're extremely pleased to be working with Konami," enthused Ian Baverstock, Kuju's development director, "they're a publisher we greatly admire." This is the first time that Konami has used a UK developer to manage a major title, but it has faith in Kuju. "Kuju impressed us with their vision for this game which, combined with their professional approach and technical skills, made them the obvious choice," said Tony Bickley of Konami Europe.



This Flash Linker is now on Nintendo's hit-list.

Lik-Sang's website sells all manner of videogame-related products.

POPULAR IMPORTERS LIK-SANG ARE THE LATEST TO FACE NINTENDO'S WRATH

WELL & TRULY LICKED

Thanks to a recent court ruling in Japan, popular Hong Kong-based website Lik-Sang is set to become the latest casualty of Nintendo's lawyers. The recent ruling means that Lik-Sang has been ordered to cease distribution of Game Boy Advance Flash Cards and Flash Linkers (devices that can be used for copying GBA games) and it's currently facing the prospect of paying out damages of HK$5 million (£346,000).

Thanks to an injunction brought by Nintendo in September, the selling of the Cards and Linkers has ceased, although it's still too early to see if Lik-Sang will face any further monetary charges. Local Hong Kong copyright law prevents people from selling videogame copying devices to the general public and this seems to be where Lik-Sang has fallen foul.

"With drugs, it is not aimed at the drug addict but at the drug trafficker," commented Judge William Waung in his statement on the case. I have no doubt that the reason they [the copying devices] sell like hot cakes is because they deliver the means whereby a person would be able to steal the games of the plaintiffs [Nintendo] housed inside the Game Boy cartridge of the plaintiffs and then illegally put the stolen games onto the defendants' Flash Card."

Lik-Sang's founder, Alex Kampl, is far from happy with the current situation and has been quick to produce a counter statement: "Before the Nintendo press release was distributed, I had delivered a Notice of Appeal to Nintendo, as well as to the High Court of Hong Kong," he says. "I am not exactly sure why Nintendo's press department didn't mention a word about it."

With Nintendo alleged to have lost around $650 million (£390 million) to piracy in 2002, Lik-Sang's fate is unsurprising. However, rather than trying to stop distributors, we feel that Nintendo should go after the actual pirates. After all, companies that sell CD writers seldom get prosecuted.

Combine this case with Nintendo's recent action against UK import shops and it looks like the big N is getting tough…

What should Nintendo do? Punish the pirates, or the company that provides the copying equipment?

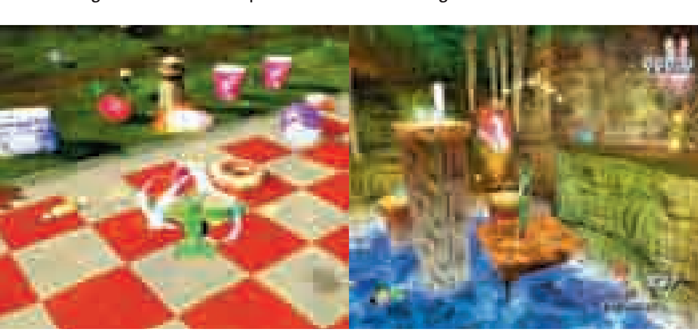
ARMY MEN SIGN OUT

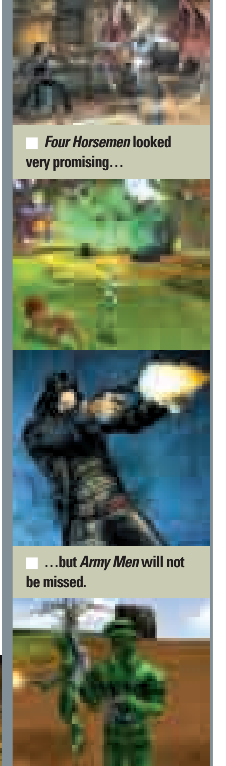
MIXED EMOTIONS AS 3DO CLOSES ITS DOORS

Following the likes of Crawfish and Rage, 3DO is the latest company to announce its departure from the videogame industry. The firm first filed for Chapter 11's bankruptcy protection just before E3 and was considering selling off its various assets or possibly merging with another company.

"We hope that this news will generate additional new opportunities," announced CEO Trip Hawkins in his statement. "At this point we are focused on pursuing either the sale of the entire company or the sale of its assets." There's still been no interest in either a merger or an assets acquisition and 3DO has now been de-listed from the Nasdaq stock exchange. The company had apparently been under close scrutiny by Nasdaq anyway due to the fact that it was unable to keep a high enough share price and had failed to pay Nasdaq's annual fees.

Although we can't say we're going to miss the likes of *Portal Runner* and the *Army Men* series, it's a shame we may never get to see *Four Horseman Of The Apocalypse* as it was looking pretty good. Of course, there's a chance that the licence may be picked up, but let's just hope we've seen the last of those little green men…





Four Horsemen looked very promising…

…but *Army Men* will not be missed.

IOMO GOES COVERT

MOBILE DEVELOPER ACQUIRED BY IOMO

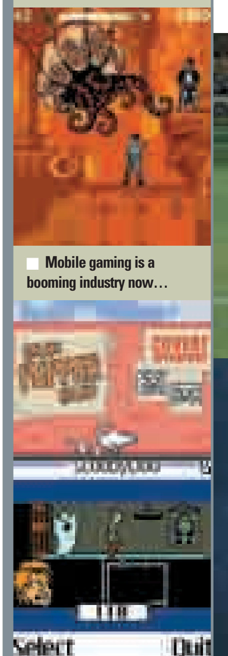
In one of the first acquisitions of its kind, mobile gaming studio Covert Operations has been acquired by the Hampshire-based IOMO.

"The rapid growth of the mobile gaming market means that the expectations for developers are rising constantly," said Niall Fraser, managing director at Covert Operations. "Covert had reached the point where we had to either expand greatly or join a company which has the resources to take full advantage of the market. We're very pleased to be joining such a leading developer as IOMO."

Covert's staff will be relocated to Hampshire and Niall Fraser will be appointed IOMO's new development director. It's also been revealed that there will be no redundancies.

John Chasey, managing director at IOMO, is also pleased with the new merger, saying: "The acquisition of Covert Operations is a natural move that will allow us to expand our capacity and acquire assets and extremely experienced staff simultaneously."

Covert Operations has plenty of experience in the mobile market and was also behind the GBC version of the award winning *Denki Blocks*, so the takeover should benefit both parties.



Mobile gaming is a booming industry now…





GAMES ROOM 101

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING

NO.8: A BAD CASE OF SEQUELITIS

While the number of games on show at this year's E3 might have been enough to allay any fears that there wasn't going to be anything for you to play at Christmas, that isn't to say that is that glisters is pure gold. Go a little further and actually look at what you've got to look forward to and you might notice that over two-thirds of everything that was showcased or announced was a sequel of some description – a game that takes a concept that has already done well and then builds upon it.

Obviously, this makes perfect sense from a business perspective, as creating a follow-up to a previously successful title ensures that there's already an established market for it; therefore, profit is virtually guaranteed. However, this kind of approach is the very reason why the games industry is so stagnant at the moment – with so few people willing to take the risk and come up with something completely original, it's hard to find a truly groundbreaking title to get all excited about these days.

As hard-core games fans, we like to think there's always something to look forward to. If even our enthusiasm is beginning to wane, it surely means there's something terribly wrong.



Too many sequels, not enough change – *FIFA* may be popular, but how much further can the series go?

All that hype, for what? A game that isn't a patch on the original.

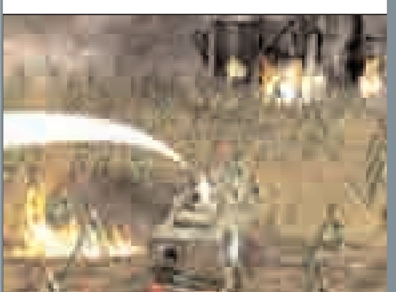


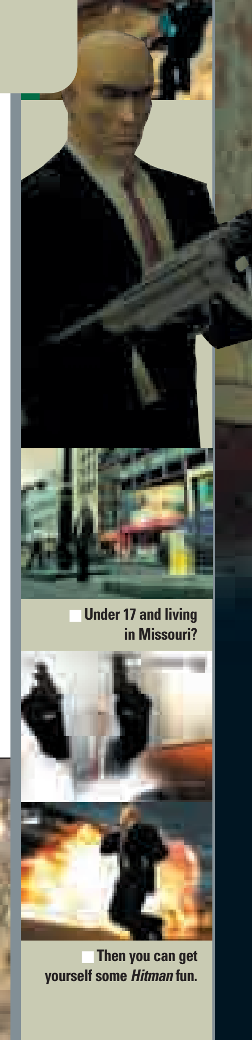
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



WAM, BAM, NO THANK YOU, MA'AM

Struggling publisher BAM! Entertainment has had a lawsuit filed against it by movie studio Spyglass Entertainment. It is alleged that BAM owes over $260,000 (about £155,000) in royalties for the rather lacklustre *Reign Of Fire*. Although BAM's original deal with Spyglass was seen as a major coup for the publisher, a slew of poor quality tiles has meant that BAM is currently struggling to stay on the Nasdaq stock exchange. Spyglass claims that after repeated enquiries BAM finally revealed that its revenue from the game was around $5.21 million (£3.10 million) meaning that Spyglass is owed over a quarter of a million dollars.





Under 17 and living in Missouri?

Then you can get yourself some *Hitman* fun.

IDSA CELEBRATES

OBJECTION OVERRULED

Following last month's news that saw Washington State passing a new law making it illegal to sell violent games to children under 17, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) is celebrating a similar ruling being overturned in Missouri. "This decision is a total and unambiguous affirmation of our position that videogames have the same constitutional status as a painting, a film, or a book," said IDSA president Doug Lowenstein.

This latest decision is bound to provide a major boost for IDSA, although several industry figures (particularly in Europe) are worried about IDSA's overzealous pursuing of each court case that appears. Many feel it would be more constructive to work directly with the lawmaking bodies, while at the same time still protecting minors – something with which we agree.

Unsurprisingly, however, IDSA seems to be doing everything it can to prevent the restricted sale of any type of game to minors. "The recent ruling sends a powerful signal to government at all levels that efforts to regulate consumers' access to the creative and expressive content found in videogames will not be tolerated," warned Lowenstein.

"say what you see"

Meaningless waffle from the industry

THIS MONTH - David Gosen (Head of Nintendo Europe) on the imminent threat of Sony's PSP:



"We will continue to watch all new entrants with interest to see if their actions match their initial talk and early hype"

gamesTM says: So, forgotten about the N64 got kicking that the N64 got kicking when the PSone came out, have we? Good to see Nintendo learning from its mistakes…

MORE FROM MR CHIPS NEXT MONTH!

NINTENDO HITS THE SILVER SCREEN

NINTENDO'S ETERNAL DARKNESS GETS READY TO SCARE A WHOLE NEW AUDIENCE

Arguably better than the GameCube's two Capcom offerings, Nintendo's psychological fright-fest, *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem*, will be the latest game to reach Hollywood. Nintendo of America has teamed up with Hypnotic (primarily producers of short films) to create TV and film development, as well as financing, production and distribution for *Eternal Darkness*. "The characters in this game are extremely complex and the story is truly dynamic," explains Gail Tilden, vice president of brand management at Nintendo of America. "We're looking forward to working hand-in-hand with Hypnotic to bring this exciting and innovative entertainment property to an even broader audience."

While we're not too sure how it would fare on the big screen (after all, we've all seen *Resident Evil*) the prospect of a TV show or mini-series definitely seems like a step in the right direction.



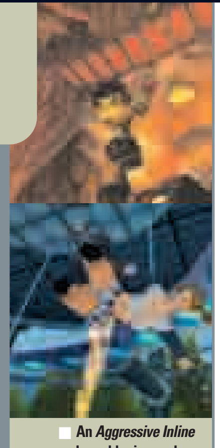
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



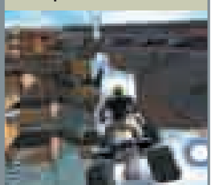
GTA TO HIT JAPAN

For some bizarre reason, Japanese gamers have so far been without a release of *Grand Theft Auto 3*. But thanks to a partnership between Rockstar Games and Capcom, they can finally get hold of the gangster-'em-up. "We're extremely excited to have the opportunity to bring *Grand Theft Auto 3* to the Japanese gaming public," said Sam Houser, president of Rockstar Games. "Capcom shares the same beliefs and we look forward to working with them to extend the global reach of our best-selling franchise."

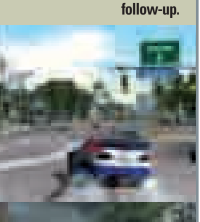


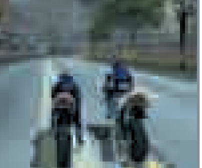


An *Aggressive Inline* sequel would raise cash…



…as would a *Burnout 2* follow-up.





Can Acclaim pick the right money-spinners?

HOW THE MIGHTY HAVE FALLEN

ACCLAIM RECEIVES A NEW CEO AS FINANCIAL WORRIES CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THE FIRM

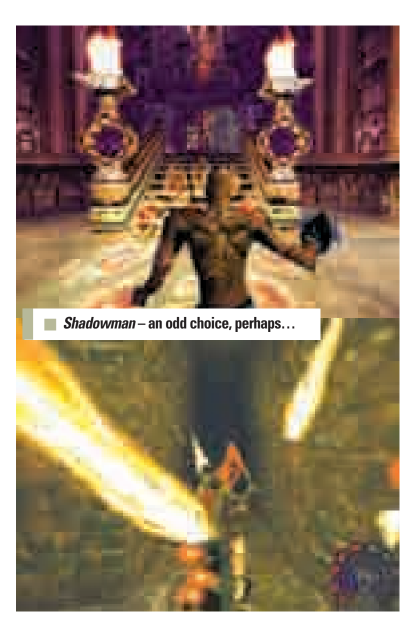
Rod Cousens has become the new CEO of the beleaguered Acclaim, replacing the company's co-founder Greg Fischbach who has resigned from the post after 16 years.

Acclaim has faced all manner of problems recently from huge net losses to lawsuits filed by its own investors, and we're quite sure that this is one of the major reasons for Cousens' appointment. Acclaim is predicting net losses of $60-70 million (£35-41 million) for the financial period between 31 March to 31 August. When you compare this to last year's profit of $12 million (£7 million), we feel it's quite clear that Cousens is going to have a serious amount of work on his hands.

"During the last five months, I have driven the process for our organisation to adopt a new global operating plan that is heavily focused on improving our core business practices, including reducing operating expenses, realigning our brand-driven product development strategy and managing our position at retail," said Cousens upon taking the job. "Whilst this is an ongoing process, I believe that we have completed the first phase that has set the stage for how we will conduct our business on a daily basis. I will continue to strengthen our management team with leaders that are dedicated to this new structure, who posses the singular goal of facilitating our future growth and returning the organisation to profitability."

With the recent revelation that the end of March saw Acclaim with only $4 million to hand, it's taken drastic measures to give itself a stronger financial position. The company has managed to raise $13 million (nearly £8 million), which will probably go towards uncompleted products. Of that figure, £9 million was raised by placing 16.4 million shares with private investors and the remaining amount came from co-chairmen Greg Fischbach and James Scoroposki.

While we're pleased that Acclaim seems to be on the (rocky) road to recovery, we're not sure why it's decided to announce a game based on *100 Bullets* (a cult comic in America) when the likes of sequels to the excellent *Aggressive Inline* or *Burnout 2* would seem like better choices to help recoup money. Still, it's obvious that Acclaim isn't prepared to give up without a fight. No matter what titles it plans to release, you can be sure it's not going to be a sequel to *Turok Evolution*…



Shadowman – an odd choice, perhaps…

We've teamed up with those fine people at GAME to offer you a £5 discount voucher, thus ensuring your hard-earned cash will stretch just that little bit further. There are still a few quality games kicking around, so we're sure you'll think of something…





ORCS, ALIENS AND GIRLS WITH VERY BIG GUNS – AND THAT'S BEFORE WE'VE EVEN TURNED THE DICTAPHONE ON. GAMES™ BRAVES THE BLIZZARD AND TALKS TO ONE OF THE MEN AT THE HEART OF THE STORM

> **"PC DEVELOPERS JUMPED ON THE XBOX BANDWAGON BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT IT WAS JUST LIKE PROGRAMMING FOR THE PC. THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE THEY HAD WAS THAT IT WASN'T"**
> *BILL ROPER, VICE PRESIDENT, BLIZZARD NORTH*

BILL ROPER

BLIZZARD NORTH

Anyone who knows anything about the games industry will recognise the name Blizzard. Having gone from being a small-time operator (doing basic platform-to-platform ports) to one of the most successful PC developers in America with its hugely popular *Warcraft*, *Starcraft* and *Diablo* franchises, the firm is now at the peak of its game. After years of graft on a single format though, Blizzard is now developing one of its first non-PC titles since the days of the SNES in the form of *Starcraft: Ghost*, a third-person *MDK*-esque shoot-'em-up with the emphasis firmly on stealth. It's a big title and one that'll plant the company firmly on the console map. However, it wouldn't even have been a possibility if it wasn't for the unforeseen success of one particular title…

"I don't think we sat down and planned out the success of *Warcraft*, but we knew that the first one was going to be crazy when we originally had the sell-in numbers in the US," says Bill Roper, vice president of Blizzard North. "Our first target was 50,000 copies, and we weren't even sure we were going to sell that many because this was 1994, but that got bumped to 75,000 and then 100,000 by the time the game shipped. We were panicked, because we didn't think we'd actually sell that many – we were going to put all these games on the shelves and they were going to rot, ending up in a landfill somewhere like *ET* – but we were very pleasantly surprised.

"It was *Warcraft II* that was the shocker; when it sold a million copies worldwide we couldn't believe it. I think it's a testament to good gameplay because those games were very solid, with a lot of replay value and opportunities for the community to interact with maps and so on. To this day, it's about word of mouth more than anything, because you ask someone you trust what games are good – if we've got them saying it's our game, that's really where success comes from."

Despite being a complete different kettle of aliens compared to its strategy-based predecessor, *Starcraft: Ghost* is already looking interesting, However, one of the most intriguing things about the development of *Starcraft: Ghost* is nothing to do with in-game elements, but the choice of lead platform. In an industry where most multiformat titles are created mainly with the PlayStation2 in mind and then ported across, the decision to develop the game for Xbox first leaves us slightly surprised, and also rather hopeful for the future. "Essentially, we're building *Starcraft: Ghost* on the Xbox and then doing pretty much simultaneous porting to the GameCube," says Roper, "because they're similar enough and we've built up a toolset that makes it easier. For the PS2 though, we brought in a company called Mass Media that specialises in porting – we used them when we did *Starcraft 64*.

"When we started the *Starcraft 64* project, we thought that because it was a PC game with such gigantic code using so much processing power, it'd never work – but these guys got it running and looking as good as you were going to make a PC game look on a console back then. That's probably what sold us on these guys for *Starcraft: Ghost*. The benefit of having another company work on that is that's what they're focused on, so they do that as quickly as possible. Obviously, our goal is to have a simultaneous launch across all three platforms, so it certainly helps."

Of course, going from working just with PCs to creating one title for multiple platforms must be a culture shock – many developers have tried… and many have failed. Thankfully, that doesn't seem to be an issue for Blizzard. "Each development platform has its differences, but they aren't so strikingly different that it's impossible to develop on two or more," says Roper. "We have people on the *Starcraft: Ghost* team who were PC developers, but they were able to bring over the engine that they worked on there – especially onto the Xbox, which is pretty much the same development platform. Xbox and GameCube are actually really similar, so porting between the two is fairly simple; however, going to PS2 is a little more difficult, because certain changes need to be made to the code.

"Once you learn the little hurdles you have to jump, though, it's not that difficult. I think that's one of the reasons why you saw so many PC developers jump on the Xbox bandwagon a couple of years ago, because they thought it was just like programming for the PC. The biggest challenge that they had was that it wasn't – at least, not completely." A fair point, just don't let Microsoft hear you, Bill…

Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne is available on PC now. *Starcraft: Ghost* is due for release on PlayStation2, Xbox and GameCube towards the end of the year.



UPWARDLY MOBILE

STILL ONLY GETTING YOUR HANDHELD KICKS ON A GBA? THEN YOU'RE MISSING SOMETHING BIG – MOBILE PHONE GAMING HAS COME A LONG WAY SINCE THE DAYS OF SNAKE…

Nintendo, take note – the N-Gage is coming. That's the warning from Nokia, the first mobile technology company to set its sights firmly on the handheld gaming market that has belonged almost exclusively to the Game Boy. Is it a move that will pay off for the Finnish giant? Perhaps – though a lacklustre display at E3 means we're withholding judgement on the mobile-cum-console until its launch later this year. However, that a company with no previous experience of gaming feels it can take such a bold step shows how far mobile phone gaming has come in recent times.

Handheld gaming isn't a new concept these days – the Game Boy's been around for well over a decade – but the prospect of playing games on your mobile phone rather than a dedicated handheld console is something that's only just coming into its own. Five years ago, all you had to look forward to when buying a new mobile was a small selection of black and white games. Today though, thanks to the rapid advancement of mobile technology (particularly the introduction of WAP and Java), there are all manner of games available, some of which are actually quite good.

Of course, the idea of using your mobile as a 'proper' gaming platform is one that most gamers would balk at. While this is only to be expected it's a rather naïve reaction to a market that's been quietly blossoming for some time. Nokia's offensive may be enough to make people sit up and take notice of what mobile phones can do for the games industry, but there are more than enough examples around at the moment to show that things are getting better all the time…

SONY ERICSSON T310

- **Price:** £139.99 (handset only)/£Free (with contract)
- **Dimensions:** 104 x 49 x 19mm
- **Weight:** 95grams
- **Screen:** LCD, 128 x 160 pixels, 256 colours
- **Battery Life:** Up to 3.5 hrs (talk)/up to 350 hrs (standby)
- **Connectivity:** No

Any phone company launching a new handset these days knows that it needs a hook to draw people in. Colour screens and camera attachments aren't anything new, but *Tony Hawk* on your mobile? Now that's something you don't see every day.

Yes, the T310 is a gaming phone – or so Sony Ericsson would have us believe. With the 'hook' being that the phone is pre-loaded with a specially created mobile version of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* and even has its own joystick, it's obviously targeted at gamers familiar with the series of games and skaters familiar with Tony Hawk. Sadly, while the phone is suitably small and has all the features that you'd expect from an inexpensive handset, it's let down by the gaming – it's 'unique' selling point.



As well as having an incredibly small screen, the mobile version of *THPS4* isn't much fun or even that playable. Sure, there's a selection of skaters and levels, but they're all pretty samey. What's more, you don't appear to have much control over your skater's movements, which takes most of the fun out of the game. Worst of all, the T310 isn't even Java-enabled, meaning it's completely incompatible with any of the better mobile games available on the Net – rather pointless for a 'gaming' phone. As a phone, this is more than competent, but as a gaming platform it doesn't cut the mustard.

"ONE OF THE PROBLEMS IS THAT, AS A GAME, THE MOBILE VERSION OF THPS4 ISN'T MUCH FUN OR EVEN THAT PLAYABLE"

VERDICT 5/10
NICE PHONE, BUT THE GAMES DISAPPOINT

NOKIA 3650

- **Price:** £299.99 (handset only)/£99.99 (with contract)
- **Dimensions:** 130 x 57 x 26mm
- **Weight:** 130grams
- **Screen:** LCD, 176 x 208 pixels, 4,096 colours
- **Battery Life:** Up to 4 hrs (talk)/up to 200 hrs (standby)
- **Connectivity:** Yes (Bluetooth/Infra-Red)

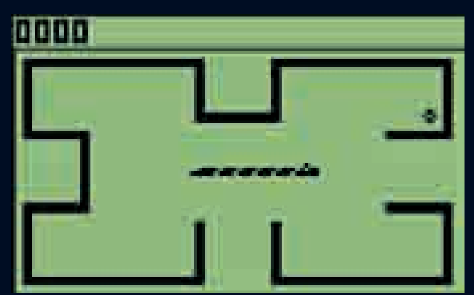
Even if you're only vaguely acquainted with phones, you'll know Nokia has a bit of a thing for interesting designs when it comes to its new handsets. Not surprisingly, the 3650 – Nokia's first mass-market phone with the ability to record and play back video imagery – follows the same trend, by looking less like a phone and more like a remote control for a fancy television. Nevertheless, the design belies a phone that not only holds its own in the areas that you'd expect, but works better than most handsets for people looking to play the latest downloadable games.

Even before you've charged it up and begun putting new Java-based titles into the phone's memory (or optional memory card, which increases your storage size exponentially), you can see that in terms of gaming the 3650 has two things going for it – the overly-large (for a mobile) screen and a handy digital thumbstick. While not specifically designed for games (unlike the joystick on Sony Ericsson's T310), the 3650's is more than adequate, although it would have to be, considering that the unusual keypad layout makes conventional control methods pretty much impossible.

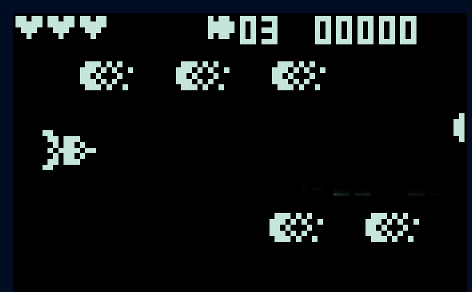
Although the pre-loaded selection of games is disappointing – an upgraded version of *Snake* and a bog-standard slide puzzle – the 3650's ability to handle even the most advanced Java game really makes it shine. Obviously, if you're expecting the same kind of quality gaming that you'd get from a GBA you're going to be disappointed, but all the games we tried ran very smoothly and felt suitably polished. The 3650 is probably as good as mobile gaming is going to get until the next wave of technology.

VERDICT 8/10
A LITTLE PRICEY, BUT GREAT FOR GAMING

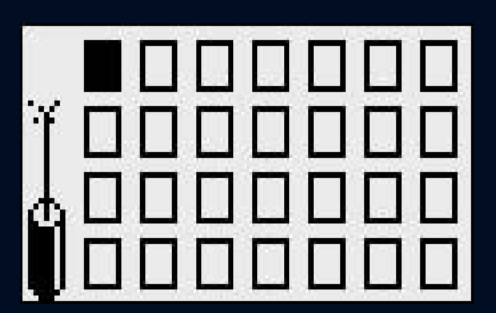
BACK TO BASICS THE BEST GAMES, NOT SO LONG AGO...



Goodness knows why so many people played *Snake* on their mobile phones, but they did. It might have been a devilishly simple concept but in terms of games, *Snake* probably did for mobile phones what *Tetris* did for the Game Boy. Addictive isn't really the word…



Think of decent side-scrolling shoot-'em-ups and *Space Impact* probably wouldn't even register; nevertheless, it was pretty playable for a mobile game. If you've never had the chance to play it, think as difficult as *R-Type* but looking nowhere near as nice and you're on the right track.



Like Snap, do you? Think you're a bit of a memory expert? Then you've probably played more than a few games of *Pairs* (or *Concentration*, depending on your make of phone) in the past. Turn the cards over and match the pairs – not particularly taxing, but still quite fun.

MOTOROLA T720

- **Price:** £159.99 (handset only)/£Free (with contract)
- **Dimensions:** 90 x 47.5 x 25mm
- **Weight:** 111grams
- **Screen:** LCD, 120 x 160 pixels, 4,096 colours
- **Battery Life:** Up to 6.5 hrs (talk)/up to 230 hrs (standby)
- **Connectivity:** No

If there was one word to describe the Motorola T720, it'd probably be 'flash'. Or 'posh'. Or maybe even 'bling bling' – although technically, that'd be two. In any case, the T720 looks far more expensive than it actually is – in fact, you might think that it's the last handset you should consider if gaming on your mobile is what you're after. But you'd be wrong. While the traditional keypad layout and lack of sound effects may make it seem as though the T720 isn't a good choice for mobile gaming, the large colour display and compatibility with most of the better titles available online proves otherwise.

Initially, the games you get pre-loaded on the handset depend on where you get it from; for instance, at the time of going to press the official Motorola website is packaging a bundle of classic Atari titles (featuring *Asteroids*, *Missile Command*, *Centipede* and *Breakout*) with every handset, while others come with a mobile version of *Moto GP*. Still, you'll most likely end up removing some of these to download more games from the Net, and thanks to the T720's J2ME Java capabilities, you've got a pretty wide choice of titles.

However, having downloaded and tested several games, we have to admit that some Java applications don't run as smoothly as we'd have liked. It's certainly not the worst we've ever seen, but all the games were slightly jerky, which can be a pain in precision titles like *Prince Of Persia* or *Splinter Cell*. Of course, this is only a minor complaint against what is otherwise a decent (and relatively cheap) handset. It might not be packed with fancy extras (if you're looking for a camera you should try the pricier T720i instead) but as an overall package of looks, ability and gaming prowess, you could do a lot worse than this.

VERDICT 7/10
SOLID AND RELIABLE, IF A LITTLE JERKY

"HAVING TESTED SEVERAL GAMES WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT SOME JAVA TITLES DON'T RUN AS SMOOTHLY AS WE'D HOPED"

PANASONIC GD87

- **Price:** £379.99 (handset only)/£120 (with contract)
- **Dimensions:** 97.5 x 49 x 23mm
- **Weight:** 103grams
- **Screen:** TFT, 132 x 176 pixels, 65,536 colours
- **Battery Life:** Up to 7 hrs (talk)/up to 220 hrs (standby)
- **Connectivity:** No

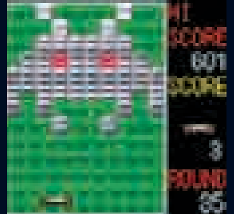
Money might not be able to buy you happiness or love (unless you know the right women, of course), but it can get you a damn nice mobile. Never mind that you're only going to use it to speak to people, the fact is that the gadget geek inside us all wants a phone to have all the very latest bells and whistles, and that costs money. Enter then the Panasonic GD87 – a mobile that costs a packet and has everything you could ever want from a phone, short of the new 3 video system.

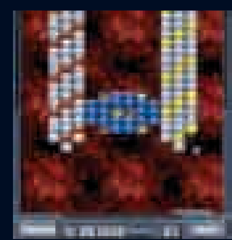
As well as being surprisingly light and slimline for a phone with a built-in camera, the big plus for gamers is the high-definition screen. Instead of using a regular 4,096 colour LCD, Panasonic's baby comes with a top-of-the-range Thin Film Transistor (TFT) screen. Also, the multi-directional thumb pad is better for control than the conventional multiple button method, even if it's not designed specifically for playing games.

The big letdown is that like the T310, the GD87 isn't Java-enabled – strange, given the price tag. This means that companies such as Gameloft aren't currently making games specifically for it. However, this is one of only two handsets currently compatible with In-Fusio game software; as long as you're on the Orange network, you'll be able to play a wide selection of decent games based on franchises like *Crash Bandicoot* and *Spyro The Dragon* – so while not having universal compatibility, the GD87 has something for gamers. It's not the future, but it's certainly a fair demonstration of what's around now.

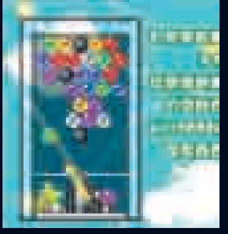
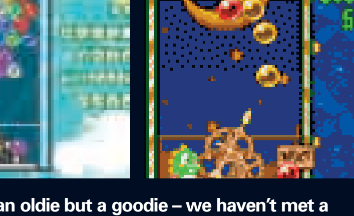
VERDICT 6/10
A GREAT POSER PHONE, BUT WITH LIMITED GAME POTENTIAL

NEW WAVE CURRENT FAVOURITES ON THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY

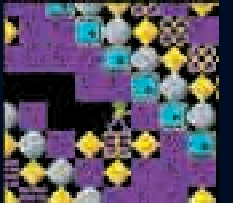
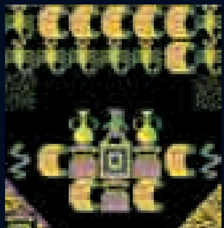




It might be an old stalwart in gaming circles, but *Arkanoid* is by far the best version of all the *Breakout*-style games around on any mobile phone at the moment. It's a 'pick up and play' kind of game that's perfectly suited to mobiles, best played in short but regular bursts.

Again, it's an oldie but a goodie – we haven't met a single person yet who can find fault with Taito's classic bubble-bursting game *Puzzle Bobble* (or *Bust-A-Move*, as it's bizarrely known over here). Unsurprisingly, it's become the mobile game of choice since the advent of colour screens.

While we're pleased that remakes of *Repton* are currently in the works for the PC, the fact that you can already download the original game to your mobile is even better. If you're after a mobile game that'll have you tearing your hair out in frustration, this is it…

SIX OF THE BEST

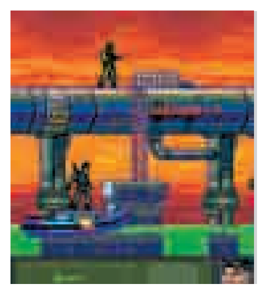
Of course, gaming on your mobile isn't much use if you haven't got anything good to play on it. While the games that come free with most phones or that can be downloaded from phone manufacturers' websites are passable, the better titles come from companies who concentrate specifically on developing games for mobile technology. While checking out which phones were better for gaming, we tested a number of titles – here's a rundown of the best games we played…

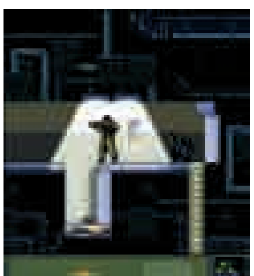
SPLINTER CELL

Price: €3.99

Tested On: Nokia 3650

Great on the Xbox, just as good on the Game Boy Advance… but on a mobile as well? Surprisingly, yes – Sam's move into Java has been pulled off with style and it works rather well. You can sneak around, hide in shadows and complete objectives, just like in the 'proper' version of the game – what more could you want?





PRINCE OF PERSIA

Price: €3.99

Tested On: Motorola T720

About as faithful to the original PC game as you're likely to get on a mobile. With seven different stages that'll see you jumping pits, dodging blades and fighting sword-wielding guards, it's certainly a decent take on the classic licence. In fact, it's enough to make us want to go back to the original all over again.



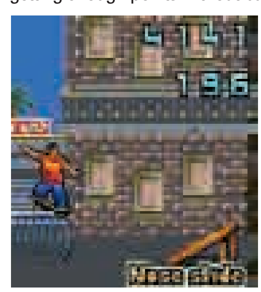


SKATE & SLAM

Price: €3.99

Tested On: Motorola T720

Despite not having the licence that the T310's *Tony Hawk* game has, this side-scrolling skate-'em-up is still pretty good. It's a simple idea – pull off tricks and earn enough points to move onto the next stage. Of course, avoiding the obstacles, mastering the moves and getting enough points without bailing is another matter entirely…





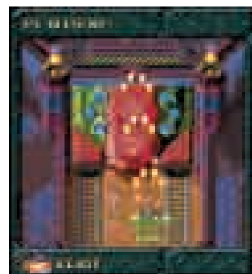
SIBERIAN STRIKE

Price: €3.99

Tested On: Nokia 3650

If you're looking for a simple-yet-fun shoot-'em-up on your mobile, they don't come much better than *Siberian Strike*. Think Capcom's *1942* but on a smaller scale; it's got wave upon wave of enemies, Smart Bombs, Charge Beams and some pretty big bosses to go up against. Plus it's tough enough to keep you frustrated for ages…





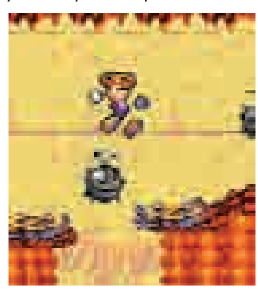
RAYMAN 3

Price: €3.99

Tested On: Nokia 3650

Considering it's running on a mobile phone, the comparisons between the GBA and Java versions of *Rayman 3* are pretty obvious. Sticking to the simple 'jump on platforms, hit enemies with fist' concept championed by the original PSone game and featuring plenty of levels, it'll keep you occupied for quite a while.



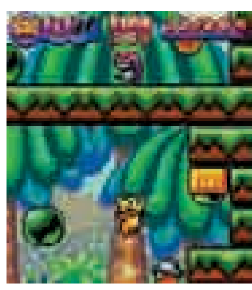


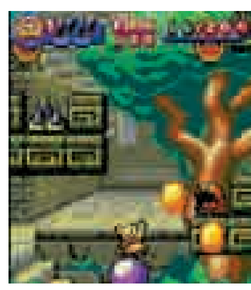
GULO'S TALE

Price: €3.99

Tested On: Motorola T720

Forget the slightly silly story about gods drawing their power from fruit – there's actually a fairly fun platform adventure in here. Help Gulo collect the fruits while attempting to dodge enemies and build temporary platforms with his bubble powers – a bit like *New Zealand Story* meets *Rainbow Islands*. Basic but quite absorbing.





HOLD THE PHONE

The ability to download videogames is a pure revolution for mobile phones. Java technology is now embedded in more than 100 million cell phones worldwide, which means there are far more Java phone users than owners of the Game Boy Advance. The download channels are up and running; the billing process simple, secure and adapted to local habits; even the biggest network operators are starting to let everyone know that phone gaming is a reality.

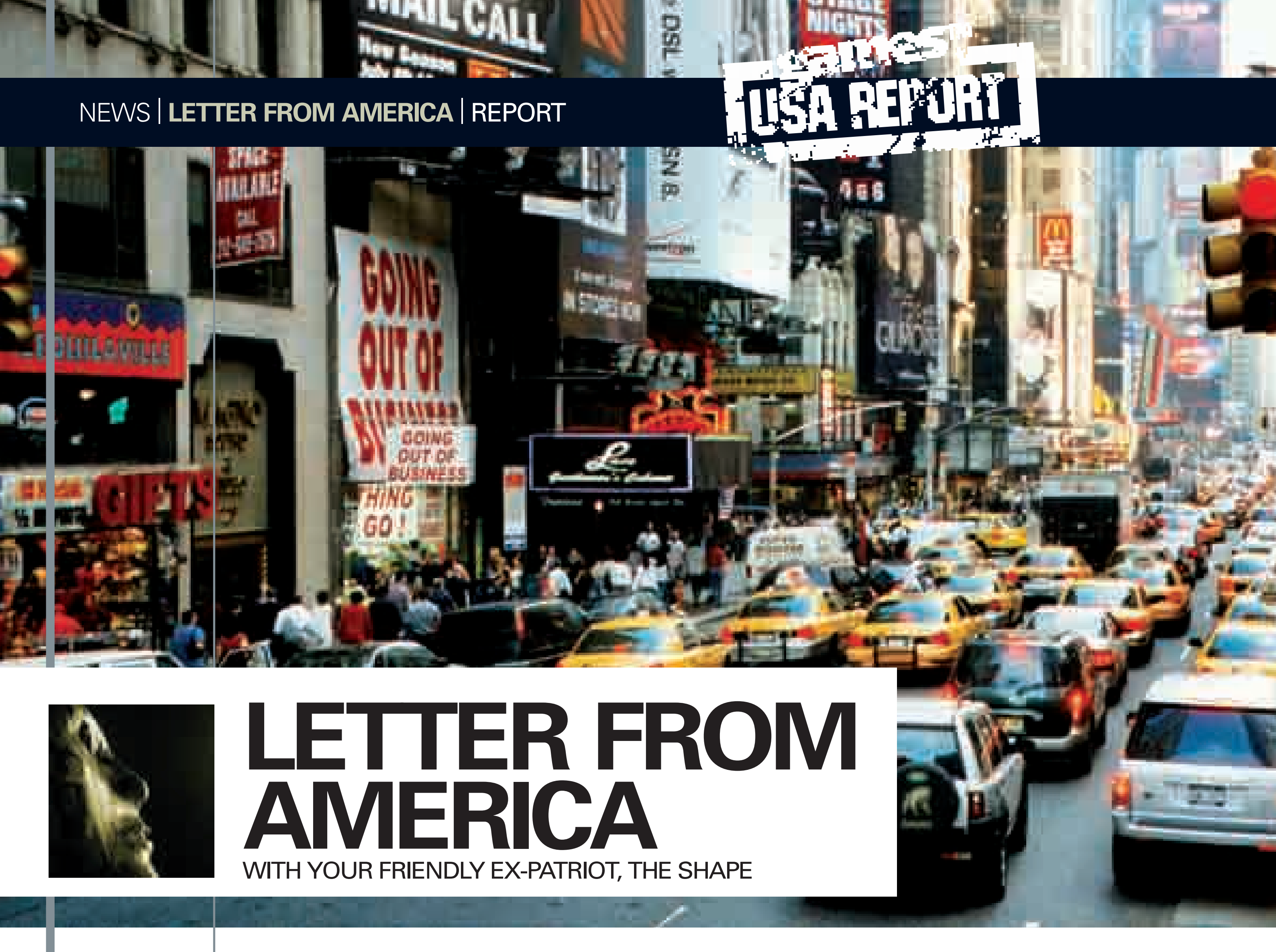
The quality of the games available from publishers is amazing (considering it's such a restricted format), making those games very similar to current mobile console titles. However, the advantage is that these mobile games are affordable: just €3 to €5 each. And customers are happy with that deal, with more and more convinced to try new games on a regular basis every month.

With new high-end handsets arriving before the end of the year (including the Nokia N-Gage, which offers Bluetooth and 3G games), mobile game quality should overtake GBA game quality before the end of 2003. Of course, mobile gaming is not yet in a position to compete with console and PC games. Today, gamers just play with their Xbox, their PS2 and their PC. In the near future though, there's no doubt that we'll see gamers starting games on their console at home, then continuing to play on their phone after leaving home or while lying in bed, sitting in a waiting room or just in the middle of nowhere on a slow train.

The time is coming when affordable mobile games have their place next to console ones – and it's sooner than you may think.

Michel Guillemot is president of Gameloft, one of the world's leading companies in mobile phone games development.

All games are available for download from www.gameloft.com through most Java-enabled mobile handsets.



LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE

"IF THERE'S ONE DEDUCTION YOU CAN MAKE ABOUT MANY AMERICAN THEM, IT'S THAT THEY AREN'T SPENDING A LOT OF TIME PLAYING

Fat kids need something to do in the summer too, y'know.

Leaving a local GameStop, there was a terrible din at my back. A mother and her kids were exiting the store after me, and the largest of the round children was screaming "I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!" at the mom. Now, I've seen this type of kid before. Estimating age is difficult because of the fat (maybe around 13) but everything about them suggests they are determined to achieve type-2 diabetes before completing puberty. Rather than blood, Coca-Cola courses through their veins, and they all look the same – like demolition balls loosely covered in giant discount store t-shirts. Vile creatures. But what had ruffled this one so? "You wouldn't even get me that one game!" he yelled accusingly, now in faux tears, as his poor mother silently loaded the rest of her gumball brood into the minivan.

This is disgusting behaviour. Personally, I'd have driven out to the country and left him for the wolves as retaliation for the public embarrassment alone. But I find myself envious of his desire – there are no videogames that I'm terribly excited by at this moment, and it's not because I managed to score valium off the Internet. It's the summer heat; it brings with it not only a drought of H2O, but also of worthwhile software. It's as though the sun's penetrating rays parch the game store shelves like bare soil, rendering them infertile and non-conducive to sprouting new hits. It's something experienced gamers have come to accept – I certainly have – but I wasn't prepared for this seasonal symptom to be as pronounced in the United States as it always was in Britain. After all, the American populace is the gluttonous creature whose appetite for entertainment is insatiable, right? Biggest ever this, 24-hour that.

Being a pasty, unsociable ghoul, I can think of no better time of year to overwhelm the gamesplayer with choice. I'd prefer by far to pay for two or three A-list titles than begin torching my white flesh outdoors, so riddle me this: just why does the games industry seem to undergo this reverse hibernation, retreating quietly to its mirror-windowed business parks during the hottest months? I can buy that some gamers – that awful 'casual' breed you keep hearing about – are easily distracted, breezing in and out of engrossment as the name suggests, and suddenly they become more concerned with dancing in the spray of burst fire hydrants or tearing about on rollerblades.

Sure, there's sun to 'enjoy', but to the consumer the summer games drought makes no sense. School-age kids, the biggest market for entertainment software whether you like it or not, have oodles more free time since school's out. If there's one deduction you can make about many American children from simply looking at them, it's that they aren't spending a lot of free time playing strenuous outdoor sports. There are a few kids shooting hoops on the corner, but what about the fatties, the



CHILDREN FROM SIMPLY LOOKING AT STRENUOUS OUTDOOR SPORTS"

slackers, the geeks and the stoners? What have they got but seven more glorious unassigned hours with which to indulge in the temptations of gaming each day? Yet here we are, without two must-have titles to rub together, when surely there should be a push similar to what we see at Christmas. High profile games are few and far between. *Brute Force* was supposed to be 'the shit' but it turns out to be just plain shit. The same fate surely awaits the currently appealing *Mace Griffin*, lest (heaven forbid) there be something great to play this season. Nintendo is at least doing something, offering in hardware what it lacks in software by giving away free GBAs (the old kind) with GameCubes; commendable indeed.

It is, however, not enough. All this free time drives the kids mad. It's true what they say about idle hands too – last summer, a bunch of teens excavated several graves near here, dressed the decaying corpses in *Star Wars* costumes (one gent was even given a Darth Vader helmet) and arranged them for the authorities to find. Perhaps if *Halo 2* had come out in July, the youth wouldn't be dreaming up such ghastly diversions.

Or maybe they'd just be more interested in how far a body would fly when struck with a grenade.

Cheers



MISS ABOUT BRITAIN…

20oz pint



LOVE ABOUT AMERICA…

Cheerleader Practice



WANT ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE SHAPE? THEN DROP HIM A LINE AT: theshape@comcast.net … HE MIGHT LISTEN, IF YOU'RE LUCKY.

AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

JIFFY LUBE

Stop that, you're just being childish. Not a product used on the sex parts but a chain of garages where they change the oil in your car and spray nice things under the 'hood'.

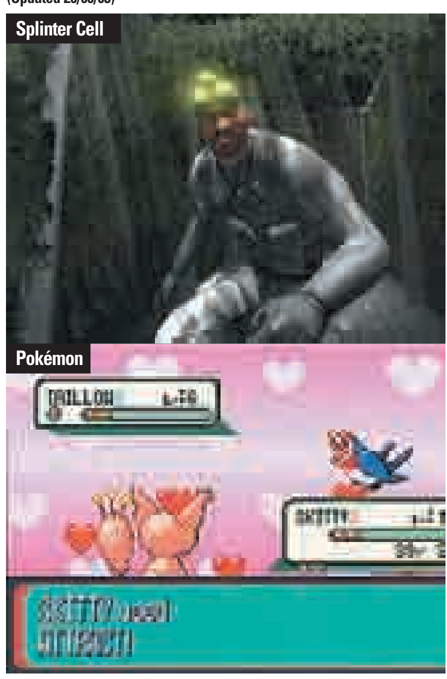




US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Multi
2	Pokémon Ruby	Nintendo	GBA
3	Def Jam Vendetta	Activision	Multi
4	Pokémon Sapphire	Nintendo	GBA
5	NBA Street Vol. 2	EA BIG	Multi
6	Midnight Club II	Rockstar	Multi
7	The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	GC
8	Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition	Konami	GBA
9	Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	GBA
10	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar	PS2

(Updated 20/06/03)


Splinter Cell

Pokémon



KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT OLLIE BARDER

“AS YOU’LL PROBABLY HAVE REALISED BY NOW, JAPAN HAS A LONG EXCELLENCE THAT HASN’T REALLY BEEN MATCHED ANYWHERE ELSE

So here I am, in a queue. Sure, so I have popcorn but I’m still in a goddamn queue. Thankfully, a rather pretty Japanese lass is chatting me up, but this does not negate the issue of queueness. Why am I queuing? Because I’m waiting to see *The Matrix Reloaded,* which has only just opened in Japan. *The Matrix* is practically a religion here so I’m mightily interested to see how these furtive nihonjin will react to the Wachowskis’ latest instalment in their magnum opus. Eventually, I enter the theatre, find my seat and watch. Closely. However, I’m not only watching the film, but also the way the Japanese react to the ads for *Enter The Matrix.*

As you probably know, Japan has a tradition of gaming excellence that hasn’t really been matched anywhere else in the world. Moreover, the Japanese love *The Matrix*. So what will happen when these two forces meet and realise that *Enter The Matrix* is a big pile of festering crap? Trying to find a film tie-in game in Japan is much like trying to find a unicorn sporting flares and a bouncy afro. Yes, there are swathes of animé tie-in games, but for a foreign film to have a game released in Japan is pretty rare. It’s also worth noting that most foreign games either never make it to these shores or bomb utterly if they do. Therefore, *ETM* is inadvertently setting a precedent for how foreign games will be perceived by the Japanese.

Naturally, my buttocks are set to Clench mode for all this. As we all know, *ETM* is not indicative of what Western designers are capable of. However, the Japanese will see this and think we’re utterly clueless about the subtle mores of game design. This isn’t such a big deal – most Japanese think foreigners are bumbling fools anyway – but we don’t need to add more fuel to this already blazing fire. While I do like Japanese games to an almost obsessive degree, I am honest enough to realise that we too can kick out some pretty impressive titles once in a while. I just wish that we could do it more often.

It’s much like a situation from your kindergarten days. You arrive to hold philosophical debates with your colleagues, only to lose it when that pretty little lady comes over and asks for some finger paint. Instead of proclaiming your undying love, you deliver multiple dead frogs to the desk of this goddess, following the logic that your hunting skills will help you earn the affection of this freckled beauty. Yes, it’s a contrived comparison, but it works. Shiny should have made *ETM* good, instead they

■ *Enter The Matrix*? Not right now, thanks…

TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON SEVEN: GOING TO THE CINEMA

Kippu o nimai itadakemasuka?	Can I have two tickets please?
Hai, kanojyowa watashito issyodesu	Yes, she's with me
Kanojyowa hanngakude iindesuka?	So she gets in for half price?
Cyotto fukoheijya naidesuka?	Isn't that a bit unfair?
Oh, kuso	Oh, shit

TRADITION OF GAMING IN THE WORLD"

delivered the gaming equivalent of eleven dead frogs to the home of some pretty Japanese girl. It's not going to work, is it?

To be frank, games should just be games; merely apeing a film is a short-term attempt to gain prestige – kudos shouldn't really be important, only the integrity of game design. *ETM* is a particularly pertinent example; the licence killed the game and now the game will kill the Japanese perception of Western game design. But is this so bad? After all, most of the top-selling titles of last year weren't made in Japan, *ETM* has sold in truly mind-boggling quantities and the industry is doing better than ever, yet all this isn't indicative of the wider issue. You see, games aren't merely an industry – they're a medium. I'm not clawing for games to be termed as 'art', but games should be the product of a foundation of solid game design, and not just some fattened cash cow.

But all this doesn't really bother me that much now. *Reloaded* was bad, but at least mildly entertaining – plus I'm still sitting next to that affectionate Japanese lass, and she's very good with her hands…

Kind regards



Want to see proper animé? Ignore *The Animatrix*, then…

ANIMATRIX, SHMANIMATRIX

While the foreign response to *The Animatrix* has been full of gushing praise, the majority of these critics are painfully and obviously ignorant when it comes to the medium of animation and the Japanese branch of animé. Yes, the Wachowskis hired some of the best directors in the business, but they still wrote the plot and oversaw the production. In short, *The Animatrix* looks like animé but is lacking in any contextual worth – and the Japanese think so too.

Animé and manga have been the staple medium of expression and entertainment in Japan for the past 50 years, so naturally the Japanese have standards on not only the aesthetic prowess of animé but also its didactic content. Spiritual education is at the forefront of most good animé and *The Animatrix* is woefully lacking on this front. Admittedly, there is a philosophical element to *The Matrix* as a whole, but it's painfully simplistic (as well as being a little glossy). The films get by this by having excessive action scenes that defy belief. In animation, cheap thrills don't come that easy.

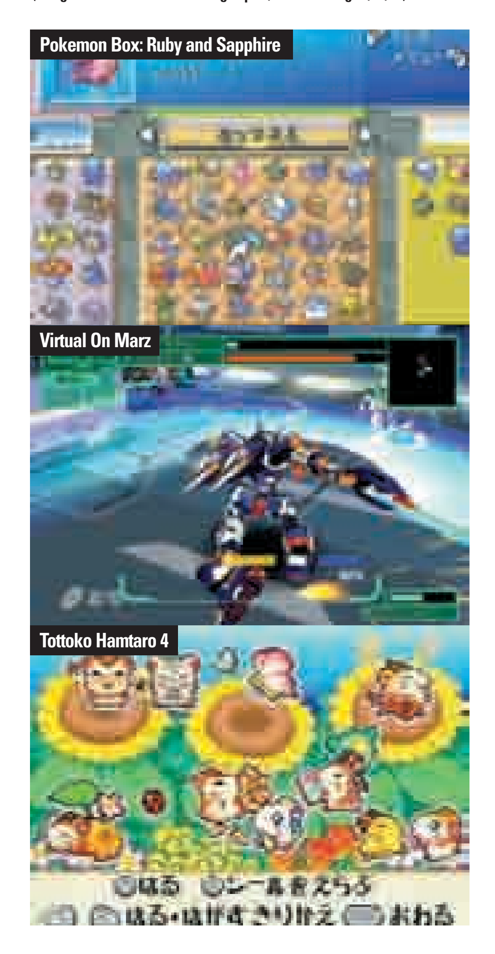
Animé has garnered a level of sub-culture kudos, and the Wachowskis want to cash in on this. It's a shrewd business tactic, but it will be only a matter of time before the remarkably intelligent human race realises what a pile of idiotic crap *The Matrix* and its multiple spin-offs really are.

So what are we left with? An animé cash-in that shows what a banal and vapid piece of nonsense *The Matrix* really is. This will be an interesting episode in fan/faeces physical mechanics… But it's still rather annoying though – the Wachowskis can happily sully the medium of film for all I care, but why couldn't they leave games and animé alone?

JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Pokémon Box: Ruby and Sapphire	Nintendo	GBA
2	Virtual On Marz	SEGA	PS2
3	Tottoko Hamtaro 4	Nintendo	GBA
4	Winning Post 5 Maximum 2003	Koei	PS2
5	Made In Wario	Nintendo	GBA
6	Sims People	EA	PS2
7	Fire Emblem: Blazing Sword	Nintendo	GBA
8	Famista 2003	Namco	GC
9	Nechu Professional Baseball 2003	Namco	PS2
10	She, The Ultimate Weapon	Konami	PS2

(Dengeki Console Game Ranking Top 50, week ending 01/06/03)



"I THINK SANDS OF TIME WILL BE A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW – I CAME AWAY FEELING VERY EXCITED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF WHAT THIS TEAM WANTED TO DO…"

JORDAN MECHNER, PRINCE OF PERSIA CREATOR

JORDAN MECHNER

UBI SOFT

Talk about shooting yourself in the foot; just two games into your career and already you've created a title that not only earns the admiration of everyone who plays it, but also goes on to sell nearly two million copies worldwide – pretty good, considering this is 1989 we're talking about. So how do you follow up something like that? The answer, quite simply, is that you don't. Since creating both *Prince Of Persia* and the sequel, *The Shadow And The Flame*, Jordan Mechner has managed to avoid tarnishing his reputation by doing, well, nothing (in the videogames industry, at least). Considering his incredibly high standards though, it's no surprise he hasn't tried to surpass his own creation up until now.

"My goal is always to create one of the one or two games a year that will excite me and draw me in enough to finish them," says Mechner. "For me, the world and storyline are essential – I want to be captivated by an overall artistic experience, not just a commercial product. I want to feel that the game creators have something to express and that by playing through to the end, I will discover their personal vision. I look for elegance, attention to detail, unity of story and game design as key values, and if I don't find them I tend to lose interest quickly."

Good lord – could we finally have found a game designer who genuinely admits to sharing exactly the same views as us? Still, if it's true that Mechner goes about creating all his games with such high standards, then the task of coming up with a new title that could better the success of the original *Prince Of Persia* must have taken a fair bit of planning.

"My biggest concern was that if there was to be a new *Prince Of Persia* game, it had to be something special and not just mapping the Prince character and universe onto a kind of game that had been done already," insists Mechner. "The first time I visited Ubi Soft's Montreal studio in 2001, I was blown away by what they had done. It gave me the same little shiver of excitement that I had had 15 years earlier when I first got the Prince up and running on my Apple II – back then, just running, jumping and climbing was a big deal. Since then, so many games have built and improved upon the basic *Prince Of Persia* gameplay that in order to recapture the same feeling of excitement and magic, the team knew they would have to take it to another level. It was great that they did this test at such an early stage, because it gave everyone confidence that this was going to be unlike any other game out there."

And it looks like the team's confidence could be well founded – having played the game, we can see why some people are saying that *Sands Of Time* is the game *Tomb Raider* wishes it was. Lara Croft's numerous cookie-cutter adventures may have entertained countless gamers, but when it comes to gymnastic ability, no-one can do it quite like the Prince.

"One quality that I think was important to the success of the original *Prince Of Persia* is the sheer exhilaration of movement," says Mechner. "You had the feeling that you are one with the animated character on the screen, that you are not just going through mechanical motions to complete the level, but that you're flying – a feeling of joy in your own acrobatic grace. This is much harder to achieve today in 3D for a number of reasons, but it's one of the key values that I hope will excite people when they see *Sands Of Time*."

Of course, that the control of the Prince is (from what we've played so far) pretty much spot on means you'll never feel like he's doing anything you don't want him to. Combine this with the fact that the young Prince is more sprightly than a gymnast on speed and *Sands Of Time* suddenly becomes all the more playable. As a rule, almost anything's possible; if you can see a ledge to grab or pole to swing on, chances are you'll be able to reach it. It's this apparent sense of complete freedom, the ability for exploration and the fact that it looks so darn lovely that makes the whole thing hang together so well – although it's also exactly what makes the future of the *Prince Of Persia* series so hard to predict.

"I think *Sands Of Time* will be a hard act to follow," admits Mechner. "This has been one of those rare experiences where a great team and a great idea come together and create something that is more than the sum of its parts. It's impossible to predict how gamers will embrace any title but whatever happens with this one, I know the people involved have put their heart and soul into it, and will look back fondly on the experience." No doubt they will, although should *Sands Of Time* go on to sell as well as the original, we reckon the experience will probably be the last thing on their minds…

Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time is due out for PlayStation2, Xbox, GameCube, PC and GBA in November, and is previewed on page 48.



HE DESIGNED IT ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET, HAD HIS DAD CREATE THE MUSIC AND USED HIS BROTHER AS THE MOTION-CAPTURE ARTIST – BUT JORDAN MECHNER'S PRINCE OF PERSIA IS ONE OF THE MOST CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED GAMES EVER CREATED. AND NOW HE'S BACK FOR MORE…



COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** VISITS A DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENT STUDIO. THIS MONTH, FIREFLY LAYS OUT THE WELCOME MAT

SOMETIMES, THE BEST THING TO DO IS TO SWIM AGAINST THE TIDE RATHER THAN GO WITH IT. GAMES™ HEADS FOR BATTERSEA TO TALK WITH ONE DEVELOPER WHO KNOWS ALL ABOUT RESISTING PRESSURE FROM ITS PEERS…

FIREFLY STUDIOS

At a time when cross-platform releases for games are becoming the norm, it's getting harder to find developers who remain dedicated to developing on just one format. Obviously, one of the main reasons for this is pure business sense. If a developer can prove itself competent on several formats then there's more chance of it being hired by one of the big publishers and it won't go under – something that's becoming more of a worry among many of the smaller developers today. Of course, there's always an exception to the rule; a developer that sticks to one format out of choice, purely because it knows where its strengths lie. Take Firefly Studios, for instance; having already placed itself firmly on the map as a PC-only developer (and with its two founders



Founded in 1999, Firefly started with a small staff list and an even smaller office that wasn't even big enough to "swing a small kitten in" according to Eric Ouellette.

The Firefly team as it is today – and a fine bunch of men they are too.

Obviously, these blokes are supposed to be working, rather than posing for the camera. Honest.

both having countless experience in the PC games industry), the Battersea-based studio is showing no sign of defecting to the console scene just yet.

"We wouldn't rule out moving into console development," says Eric Ouellette, executive producer at Firefly Studios, "but we've succeeded by adapting and evolving the things that we know we're good at, so right now we'd like to stick to that philosophy. As the industry grows older and consoles become more high-spec and versatile, it's likely that the two markets [console and PC] will become more interwoven. Our new title, *Space Colony*, is certainly moving in that direction and would suit a console audience more than some of our previous titles; it's less niche and has huge mass-market appeal. Although it incorporates some defensive-based combat elements that will keep core gamers happy, the entire game is set out in an easily accessible, friendly and funny format that anyone with a sense of humour will enjoy."

Sticking to what you're good at is certainly one way of ensuring that you get to work on projects that keep the company productive, but it's not necessarily the smartest business move – as you probably know, things aren't too rosy at the more independent end of the games development industry. The only way to guarantee success these days as a single-format developer is to storm onto the scene and make your first few titles really count – just like Firefly managed to in 2001 with its first game, *Stronghold*. "As one of our first titles, we knew that there was a market for a title like *Stronghold*," says Ouellette, "but we just weren't quite sure how big it was going to be. We really put our heart and soul into the games that we make and this was particularly the case with *Stronghold*, simply because it was the first title Simon and I had worked on together since leaving Impressions Games. We reworked the concept and prototype time and time again before taking it to a publisher, but this obviously paid off. Take 2 signed the game soon after we showed it to them and our close relationship with them continues to this day."

"When it came to *Stronghold*, we were confident that people wanted it and that we could deliver it," adds Simon Bradbury, lead programmer. "Saying that though, the whole

"I THINK WE'LL ALWAYS WORK ON THE PC SPECIFICALLY, BUT YOU NEVER KNOW – FIVE YEARS IS A LONG TIME IN THE INDUSTRY"

SIMON BRADBURY, FIREFLY STUDIOS

MOVERS & SHAKERS

MICHAEL BEST (ART DIRECTOR)

Mike's background is in fine art, photography, film and video production. After graduating from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, Canada, he taught 3D animation and multimedia. Since arriving in London in 1999 he has put his artistic skills to work in the computer games industry. Past projects include *Caesar III* and *Ultimate Soccer Manager 2000*.

ROB THORNELY (GRAPHIC ARTIST)

Rob studied graphic design and illustration at Leeds University. After a successful escape from an accidental career in secondary school teaching, Rob went on to work for Impressions Games in London – there, he was part of the team that put together *Ultimate Soccer Manager 2000*. Rob is a keen comics fan and has a special interest in character design. Since joining FireFly, he has contributed to *Stronghold* as well as developing ideas for *Space Colony*.

DARREN WHITE (GRAPHIC ARTIST)

Darren studied industrial design at Loughborough University, where he gained an appreciation for computer graphics. He then went on to work for the Vega Group, where he produced graphics and animations for the Royal Air Force and Ministry of Defence. Following that, he worked as part of the Impressions Games team producing *Ultimate Soccer Manager 2000*. His particular interest is in character modelling and animation, although he often gets lumbered with modelling the trees.

ROB EUVINO (SOUND DESIGNER)

A freelance composer and sound designer with over 11 years of professional experience in his field, Robert has produced musical scores, designed sound effects, recorded voice-overs and edited video for over ten published CD-ROM titles, including *Caesar III*.



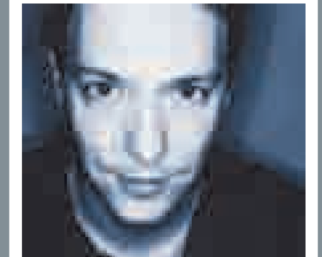






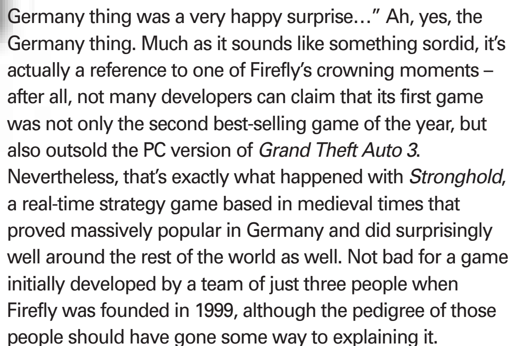


Some of the characters on offer in *Space Colony* are suitably stereotypical.



"IDEAS ARE NEVER SOMETHING THAT WE'VE BEEN SHORT OF – IT'S ACTUALLY REALISING THEM THAT'S THE HARD PART…"

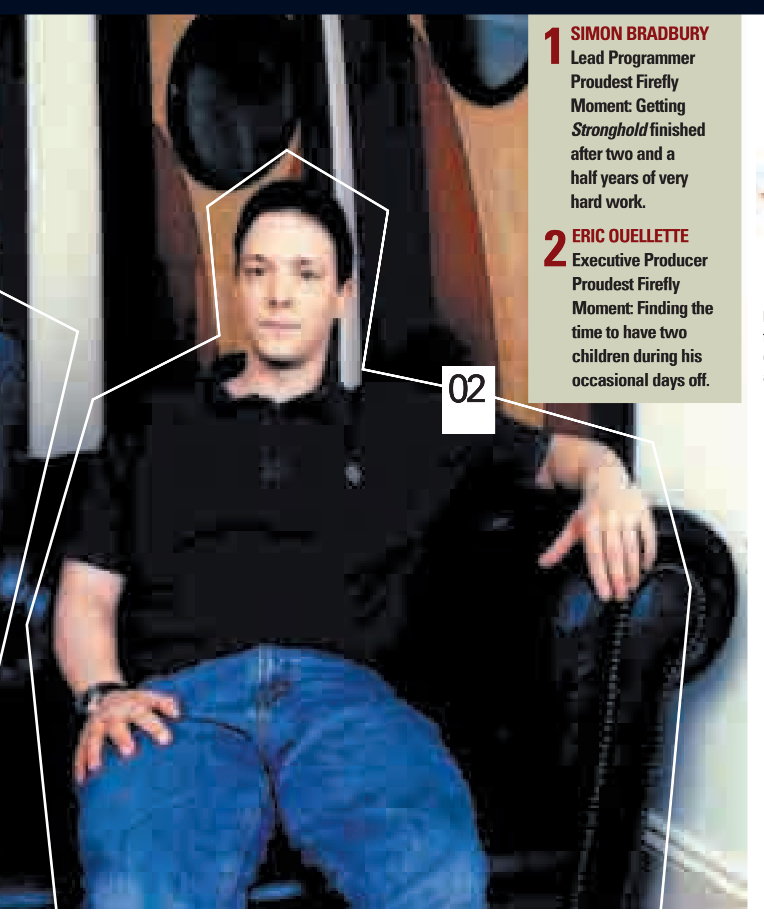
ERIC OUELLETTE, FIREFLY STUDIOS



01

Germany thing was a very happy surprise…" Ah, yes, the Germany thing. Much as it sounds like something sordid, it's actually a reference to one of Firefly's crowning moments – after all, not many developers can claim that its first game was not only the second best-selling game of the year, but also outsold the PC version of *Grand Theft Auto 3*. Nevertheless, that's exactly what happened with *Stronghold*, a real-time strategy game based in medieval times that proved massively popular in Germany and did surprisingly well around the rest of the world as well. Not bad for a game initially developed by a team of just three people when Firefly was founded in 1999, although the pedigree of those people should have gone some way to explaining it.

"I used to freelance for Impressions Games," recalls Simon, "co-designing and programming titles like the first three *Caesar* games and *Lords Of The Realm*. It was during that time that I met Eric, who was working in Boston as a producer. When some major changes were made at Impressions in 1998, we decided that the smart (if somewhat risky) move for us was to set up our own company and do for ourselves what we'd been doing for someone else for the past eight years." "We'd both worked on some great games together," chips in Ouellette, "although we always seemed to have differing views about which aspects of a game should take priority – I prefer the real-time strategy side, while Simon favours the management side of things. Between the two of us though, we came up with some games that proved to be very popular among PC gamers. As you can imagine, starting out on your own is always daunting but we were confident that our combined experience and passion for quality games would prove to be a winning combination."

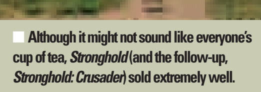


1 SIMON BRADBURY
Lead Programmer
Proudest Firefly Moment: Getting *Stronghold* finished after two and a half years of very hard work.

2 ERIC OUELLETTE
Executive Producer
Proudest Firefly Moment: Finding the time to have two children during his occasional days off.

Taking more than a few cues from *The Sims*, *Space Colony* has your colonists going about their own 'business', as it were. Even if it is decidedly rude.

Unfortunately, running a space colony comes with risks – like attacks from alien bees.



Although it might not sound like everyone's cup of tea, *Stronghold* (and the follow-up, *Stronghold: Crusader*) sold extremely well.

It's clear from the history of Firefly's staff and the list of games already under its belt that there's a predilection for the PC. However, with console specs moving ever closer to the power of today's PCs (and firms like Sony and Microsoft pushing towards convergence technology), is there the possibility that the days of the gaming PC could be numbered? "There will always be a place for the PC as a gaming platform," reckons Ouellette. "PC technology advances at a greater rate and more frequently than console hardware. Also, PC gamers are by their nature obsessive about technology and the gaming options it affords them, which makes them a niche. What's more, really hard-core gamers will always want to play on the latest technology, whether they choose to dabble with consoles or not. For the foreseeable future, I reckon the situation will stay pretty much as it is." Bradbury believes that the biggest change in gaming at the moment is broadband, particularly its growing availability. "I think console manufacturers have sensibly waited for the right technology," he says. "It's going to be really interesting to see how online console games become more popular as developers push the envelope of online play with their software."

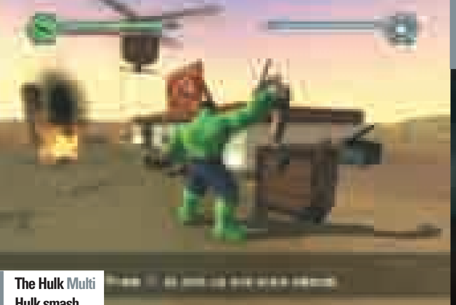
Of course, it's no secret that the two genres that work best on the PC are FPS and RTS games. With so many games of that ilk around at the moment, will *Space Colony* (previewed on page 58) have what it takes to capture the imagination of those who aren't familiar with Firefly's past successes? The developers themselves don't see this being much of a problem. "*Space Colony* offers the gaming public something they've never really had before, combining two great gaming genres – a classic 'builder' like *Sim City* and a people simulator," says Bradbury. "It's something completely fresh and opens up what are often considered to be niche genres to the mass market. I think the market is becoming even less diverse as time goes on and *Space Colony* really swims against that tide." "*Space Colony* sees us applying many of the same skills we've used in our previous games," agrees Ouellette, "but in a completely new package and environment. We've focused a lot more on personalities than we've done before, which has created a whole new world of gameplay, not to mention technical challenges, for us. It's definitely been one of the most light-hearted projects that we've worked on and the whole team has been able to incorporate all sorts of off-the-wall ideas into it. It's been fun so far and we're confident that gamers will be able to see this in the end result."

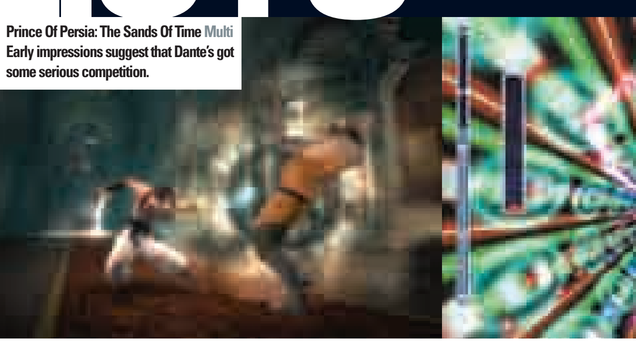
No doubt *Space Colony* is almost certainly guaranteed to find success when it gets a release later this year – whether it's just with the Germans (who, it would appear, seem to have a particular passion for RTS games) or with gamers around the world – simply because of the reputation of *Stronghold* and *Stronghold: Crusader*. Obviously though, actually getting the product completed and out of the door is only a small piece of the Firefly puzzle. "What's really exciting to us is that we're about to expand," says Bradbury. "After three years as a UK-only developer, we're about to open a new US office with a second team. They'll continue to get direction from us, but work on a totally separate title – although genre-wise, we won't be straying too far from the areas we know so well…"

Space Colony isn't just about looking after your, er, space colony – you have to care for the charming people inside too.

RELEASE LISTS


1080° Avalanche GC
Will *1080°* out amp *Amped?*


The Hulk Multi
Hulk smash.


Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time Multi
Early impressions suggest that Dante's got some serious competition.

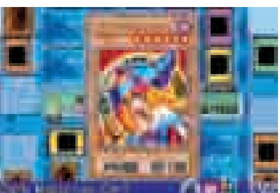


MOST PLAYED

YU-GI-OH!: WORLDWIDE EDITION

Format: Game Boy Advance
Developer: Konami

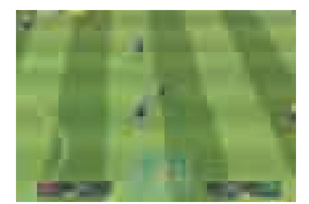
It's not very often that we can tear ourselves away from *Advance Wars* or *Pokémon Sapphire*, but somehow Konami's *Yu-Gi-Oh!* has ensnared us. It may be the fact that there's over a thousand different cards to trade and collect, or it could be the fantastic link-up mode, nevertheless *Yu-Gi-Oh!* is superb.



WINNING ELEVEN 6: FINAL EVOLUTION

Format: GameCube
Developer: Konami

It's been on import for some time but a lunch break wouldn't be complete without a quick round of the beautiful game. Like previous incarnations, *WE6* is the game that just keeps giving – extended play reveals even more depth and shows why the series can't be touched.



RISE OF NATIONS

Format: PC
Developer: Big Huge Games

When we're not hitting deadlines or arduously playing the latest games, there's nothing we like better than controlling huge armies and marching them to their doom. *Rise Of Nations* is one of the best RTS games of recent months and with 18 empires to conquer it's going to keep you busy for ages.





PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
JULY			
18 July	Dead To Rights	Electronic Arts	
25 July	Alien Vs Predator: Extinction	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Alter Echo	THQ	
TBC	Everybody's Golf 3	SCEE	
TBC	Gladius	LucasArts	
AUGUST			
01 August	Futurama	SCi	
01 August	Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi	
15 August	Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts	
22 August	XGRA	Acclaim	
TBC	Falcone: Into The Maelstrom	Virgin	
TBC	The Great Escape	SCi	
TBC	Medal Of Honour: Fighter Command	Electronic Arts	
TBC	The X-Files: Resist Or Serve	Vivendi	
TBC	Yu-Gi-Oh: Duelists Of The Roses	Konami	
SEPTEMBER			
12 September	Judge Dredd: Dredd Vs Death	Vivendi	
19 September	True Crime: Streets Of L.A.	Activision	Wanted
26 September	Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon	Ubi Soft	
26 September	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
TBC	Alias	Acclaim	
TBC	ATV Off Road Fury 2	SCEE	
TBC	Conflict: Desert Storm II	SCi	
TBA	Dark Chronicle	SCEE	Wanted
TBC	Freedom Fighters	EA	Wanted
TBC	LMA Manager 2004	Codemasters	
TBC	Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time	Ubi Soft	Wanted
TBC	Soul Calibur II	EA	Wanted
TBC	SSX 3	EA	
TBC	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	EA	
OCTOBER			
24 October	XIII	Ubi Soft	Wanted
TBC	Fallout: Brotherhood Of Steel	Vivendi	
TBC	FIFA Football 2004	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Head Hunter II	SEGA	
TBC	Pop Idol	Codemasters	
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Time Crisis 3	SCEE	
TBC	Urban Freestyle Soccer	Acclaim	
TBC	Zone Of The Enders: The 2nd Runner	Konami	
NOVEMBER			
TBC	Buffy The Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	Vivendi	
TBC	Chaos Legion	Capcom	
TBC	Full Throttle II	LucasArts	
TBC	James Bond: Everything Or Nothing	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Legacy Of Kain: Defiance	Eidos	
TBC	Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Red Dead Revolver	Capcom	
TBC	Tony Hawk Underground	Activision	Wanted
DECEMBER			
TBC	Gran Turismo 4	SCEE	Wanted

GAMECUBE

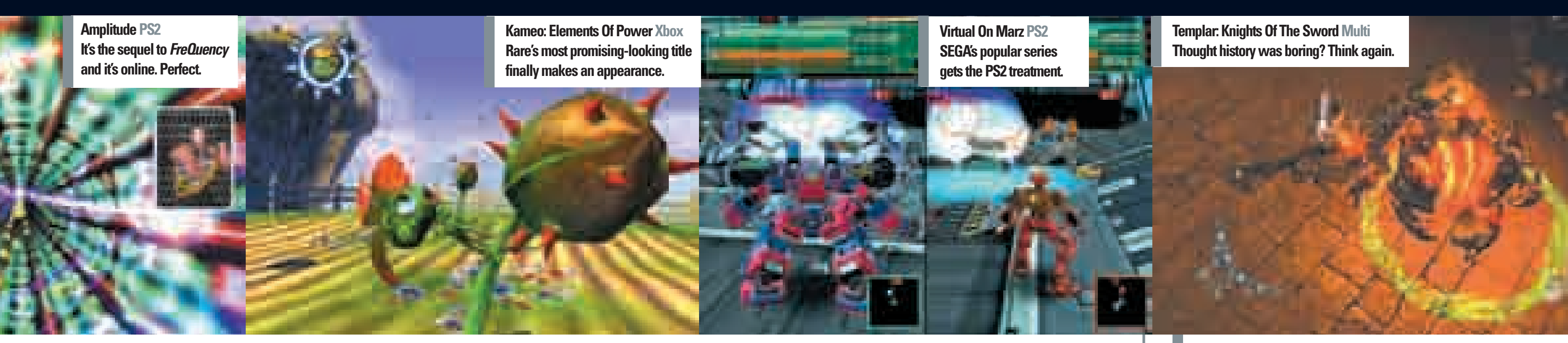
Month	Title	Publisher	
JULY			
25 July	Dead To Rights	Electronic Arts	
AUGUST			
01 August	Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi	
22 August	XGRA	Acclaim	
29 August	Futurama	SCi	
29 August	P.N.03	Capcom	
SEPTEMBER			
05 September	Starsky & Hutch	Empire	
12 September	Conan	TDK	
19 September	True Crime: Streets Of L.A.	Activision	Wanted
26 September	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
TBC	The Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi	
TBC	Wallace & Gromit: Project Zoo	BAM! Entertainment	
OCTOBER			
03 October	Bulletproof Monk	Empire	
31 October	Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	Ubi Soft	Wanted
TBC	Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg	SEGA	Wanted
TBC	F-Zero GC	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Star Wars Rogue Squadron: Rebel Strike	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	
NOVEMBER			
TBC	Buffy The Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	Vivendi	
TBC	James Bond: Everything Or Nothing	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Judge Dredd: Dredd Vs Death	Vivendi	
TBC	Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi	
TBC	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	
TBC	Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time	Ubi Soft	Wanted
TBC	Samurai Jack: The Amulet Of Time	BAM! Entertainment	
TBC	Tony Hawk Underground	Activision	Wanted



XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher
AUGUST		
01 August	Futurama	SCi
01 August	Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi
01 August	Dragon's Lair 3D	THQ
08 August	Alien Vs Predator: Extinction	Electronic Arts
08 August	Dragon's Lair 3D	THQ
22 August	XGRA	Acclaim
29 August	The Great Escape	SCi

CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES


Amplitude PS2
It's the sequel to *FreQuency* and it's online. Perfect.

Kameo: Elements Of Power Xbox
Rare's most promising-looking title finally makes an appearance.

Virtual On Marz PS2
SEGA's popular series gets the PS2 treatment.

Templar: Knights Of The Sword Multi
Thought history was boring? Think again.

SEPTEMBER			
05 September	The Italian Job: L.A. Heist	Eidos	
12 September	Outlaw Volleyball	TDK	
19 September	NBA 2K4	SEGA	
19 September	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon:	Ubi Soft	
19 September	True Crime: Streets Of L.A.	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Alter Echo	THQ	
TBC	Black & White	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Buffy The Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	Vivendi	
TBC	Conflict: Desert Storm II	SCi	
TBC	Raven Shield	Ubi Soft	
TBC	Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic	LucasArts	Wanted
TBC	XIII	Ubi Soft	Wanted
OCTOBER			
31 October	Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes	Atari	
TBC	Bulletproof Monk	Empire	
TBC	Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon	THQ Wanted	
TBC	Dancing Stage Unleashed	Konami	
TBC	Deus Ex: Invisible War	Eidos	Wanted
TBC	Dino Crisis 3	Capcom	
TBC	FIFA 2004	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Hunter The Reckoning: Wayward	Vivendi	
TBC	Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Otogi: Myth Of Demons	SEGA	
TBC	X-Files: Resist Or Serve	Vivendi	
NOVEMBER			
14 November	Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time	Ubi Soft	Wanted
21 November	Beyond Good & Evil	Ubi Soft	
TBC	Colin McRae Rally 04	Codemasters	
TBC	Doom III	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Headhunter 2	SEGA	
TBC	Ninja Gaiden	Microsoft	
TBC	NHL 2K4	SEGA	Wanted
TBC	Starcraft: Ghost	Vivendi	
TBC	Tony Hawk Underground	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Wrath	LucasArts	
DECEMBER			
TBC	Grabbed By The Ghoulies	Microsoft	
TBC	Thief III	Eidos	



PC

Month	Title	Publisher
JULY		
18 July	Dragon's Lair 3D	THQ
18 July	Time Of Defiance	NiCE
25 July	Neverwinter Nights: SOU	Atari
TBC	IndyCar Series	Codemasters
AUGUST		
12 August	FirePower	GMX
29 August	Breed	CDV Wanted
29 August	The Great Escape	SCi
29 August	Tron 2.0	Ubi Soft
TBC	Heaven And Hell	CDV

SEPTEMBER			
01 September	Counter Strike: Condition Zero	Sierra	
01 September	Judge Dredd: Dredd Vs Death	Vivendi	
30 September	Crusaders	Wanadoo	
TBC	Commandos 3: Destination Berlin	Eidos	
TBC	Half-Life 2	Vivendi	Wanted
TBC	Halo	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Apocalyptica	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Conflict: Desert Storm II	SCi	
OCTOBER			
01 October	Pop Idol	Codemasters	
TBC	Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon	THQ	
TBC	Chicago 1930	Wanadoo	Wanted
TBC	Deus Ex: Invisible War	Eidos	Wanted
NOVEMBER			
01 November	Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy	LucasArts	
21 November	Worms 3D	SEGA	
TBC	Call Of Duty	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Doom III	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Far Cry	Ubi Soft	
TBC	Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	Take 2	



GBA

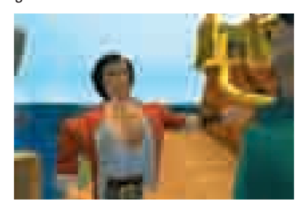
Month	Title	Publisher	
JULY			
25 July	Altered Beast	Atari	
25 July	Crazy Taxi	Atari	
25 July	Pokémon Ruby	Nintendo	Wanted
25 July	Pokémon Sapphire	Nintendo	Wanted
AUGUST			
01 August	Sega Smash Pack	Atari	
01 August	Sega Arcade Gallery	Atari	
08 August	Stuntman	Atari	
22 August	Rock 'n' Roll Racing	Vivendi	Wanted
TBC	Need For Speed: Porsche Unleashed	Zoo	
TBC	Sim City 2000	Zoo	
TBC	Sonic Pinball Party	SEGA	Wanted
SEPTEMBER			
09 September	Starsky & Hutch	Empire	
19 September	Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	Wanted
26 September	The Hobbit	Vivendi	
TBC	Kirby: Nightmare In Dream Land	Nintendo	
OCTOBER			
10 October	Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon	Ubi Soft	
31 October	Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town	Ubi Soft	Wanted
TBC	Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Super Mario Bros 3: Super Mario	Nintendo	
NOVEMBER			
14 November	Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time	Ubi Soft	Wanted
TBC	Mario And Luigi	Nintendo	

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice.

games™ ON THE HORIZON

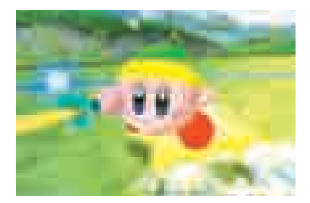
GALLEON: ISLANDS OF MYSTERY

Format: Multiformat
Publisher: TBA
Still without a publisher, *Galleon: Islands Of Mystery* is so far on the horizon that we can hardly see it. Whether it will ever actually appear remains to be seen; however, if it's half as good as Toby Gard says, then we'll be in for a right treat. It would be a shame if this pirate-'em-up gets sunk before it's released.



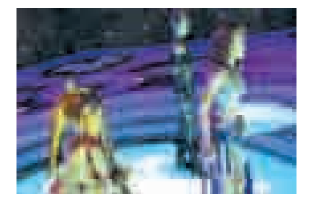
KIRBY AIR RIDE

Format: PlayStation2, Xbox
Publisher: Nintendo
Despite feeling slightly cheated with the recent NES remake on the Game Boy Advance, Nintendo is promising an original new game for the pink one's GameCube outing. Featuring some gorgeous-looking tracks to race around and a plethora of mini-games, *Kirby* could be just the sort of surprise hit that Nintendo needs.



FINAL FANTASY X-2

Format PS2
Publisher Square Enix
Already a massive success in Japan, Square's first true sequel to its *Final Fantasy* franchise is just what avid RPG gamers are waiting for. Everyone's favourite summoner, Yuna, returns with a selection of new friends and numerous improvements to the game's battle system, we can't wait.





THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS…

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LUCKY YOU ARE…



Just recently I've found myself getting increasingly irritated by the idealistic views of certain people in the industry (see last month's Think Tank, for instance).

The videogame industry is all about making money. Shock. Horror. Hold the front page. Of course it f**king is! It's an industry!

Just because you're not one of those counting the cash and have worked on a few duff projects, it doesn't mean to say you should leave the studio feeling dirty and used every day.

I fell in love with an industry where the whole point of everything I do relies on people enjoying themselves. If people don't enjoy the games we make, nobody buys them, we don't make any money and we're all out of a job. It's that simple.

Good games cost a lot of money to make – gone are the days when a group of budding Bitmaps could get together, learn a little Basic, record it onto a tape, phone up their local Woolies and suddenly they've gone from back bedroom to on sale for the cost of a bumper pack of C60s. It just doesn't happen like that any more. Somebody has to fund these triple-A projects that require seemingly limitless resources to fulfil the dreams of the developers. Cue Mr X and his team.

It's a sad fact but it's a means to an end. Yes, you're working all the hours that God sends on something that sounded amazing on paper but has ended up as a poor *Rise Of The Robots* clone, but somebody's got to do it if the industry's going to keep going.

And as much as you'd like to whinge about the 'reality' of working in the games industry, there are plenty of people out there picking fag ends out of the urinal at your local McDonald's who would kill for the chance.

Anonymous member of the videogames industry who, once again, is reluctant to be named.

FROM THE FRONT

THE BATTLE FOR CONSOLE SUPREMACY CONTINUES. THIS MONTH IT'S THE GBA THAT'S MAKING A KILLING.

NINTENDO FINALLY REVEALS SOME IMPRESSIVE SALES FIGURES FOR ITS LATEST HANDHELD

AMERICA GOES GBA CRAZY

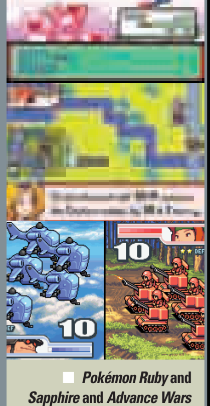
Anybody looking forward to next year's battle between the PSP and Game Boy Advance may be interested to hear that Nintendo's handheld has had a phenomenal launch in America. Since its release, the Advance SP has shifted 1.1 million units in ten weeks (that's an incredible ten units a minute) – ample proof that Nintendo has a vice-like grip on the handheld market.

"In our industry, any product selling more than one million units is a certified mega-hit," says Peter MacDougall, executive vice president of sales and marketing at Nintendo of America. "For Game Boy Advance SP to outsell each of the home console systems is testament to the expanding popularity of gaming on the go."

Shelly Friend, head of PR at Nintendo Europe, was quick to agree. "We're really pleased with how successful the Game Boy Advance SP is selling globally," she said. "We'll have shipped one million in Europe by July, and there are now over 150 million people worldwide who own a Game Boy, which demonstrates the continuing strength of the brand."

In fact, so happy is Nintendo with the SP's figures, it will be launching two brand new colours in America this September, namely Onyx and Flame (black and red in layman's terms). It's quite obvious that with the recently revealed figures and a slew of great titles on the way (*Advance Wars 2* and *Sword Of Mana* to name but two), Nintendo doesn't plan on giving up its handheld throne any time soon. As to whether the PSP will be the machine to topple the seemingly unstoppable handheld, we'll just have to wait and see…





Pokémon Ruby and *Sapphire* and *Advance Wars 2* are bolstering the GBA.

How long will it be before the rumoured Xbox 1.5 makes an appearance?

GAMES™ CHECKS OUT THE LATEST HARDWARE RUMOURS

HEARD THE LATEST?

Although we thoroughly enjoy our current selection of consoles, it doesn't mean that From The Front isn't going to get excited when new information about the next generation of consoles trickles through to us.

PlayStation3 rumours have been circulating for ages now, but semiconductor manufacturer Elpida's director, Shuichi Otsuka, has revealed that Sony has asked the company to provide DRAM for the new console.

Despite not showing at E3, Microsoft's Xbox 1.5 is also widely reported to now be on the cards, with several Japanese magazines convinced that a new sleeker machine is definitely on the way. There's strong speculation suggesting that the new machine will be packaged with *True Fantasy Live* later this year in an attempt to boost the machine's flagging sales in the East.

Even with confirmation from Nintendo that it's definitely releasing a follow up to the GameCube, there's still been very little news about it. It's strongly rumoured that the machine will launch in the spring of 2005, but that's the only solid news our spies could uncover. More news on all three consoles as we get it.

PIE IN THE SKY

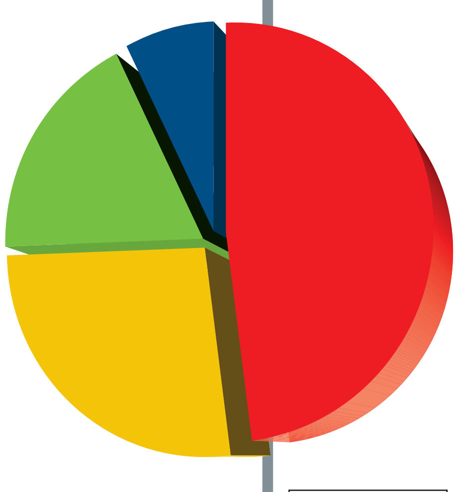
GREAT FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR TAKE 2 AND SCI

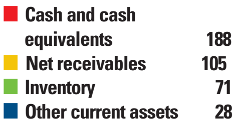
Take 2 and SCi are the latest software companies to announce solid year-end figures for the last fiscal year. No doubt thanks to the huge success of Rockstar Games' *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, Take 2's net sales for the quarter ending 30 April 2003 were $194.2 million (£116.7 million), a 14 per cent increase for the same period a year ago. Actual net income of $15.2 million (£9.1 million) represented a massive increase of 58 per cent over last year.

"Our second quarter results reflect Take 2's continued success as a leading independent publisher and distributor," announced a clearly pleased Jeffrey Lapin, Take 2's CEO. "Top-selling products from our world-renowned Rockstar Games label once again drove our publishing revenue, and we've also benefited from the significant investments we have made over the past year in building Jack Of All Games into the leading North American distributor of interactive entertainment software, hardware and accessories."

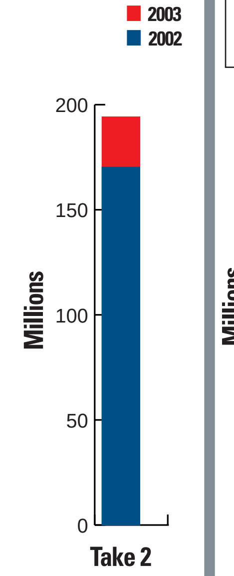
Thanks to the massive success of *Conflict: Desert Storm*, SCi had a turnover of £7.3 million (a respectable 22 per cent growth on last year's figures), while pre-tax losses were only £0.8 million, well below the predicted figure of £4 million. "Continued strong sales in the first six months leave us ahead of our original expectations," said SCi chief executive Jane Cavanagh. "The prospects for meeting our expectations for the 2003 financial year are very encouraging."

It seems that SCi's recent strategy of pursuing smaller licences like *Futurama* and *The Great Escape* could prove a pivotal turning point, although we're still not too sure of the marketability of the latter. With the recent losses in the UK industry, it's refreshing to see the likes of Take 2 and SCi doing so well. Let's hope it continues…

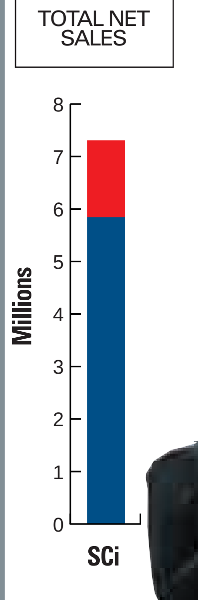




TAKE 2'S CURRENT ASSETS ($ MILLIONS)



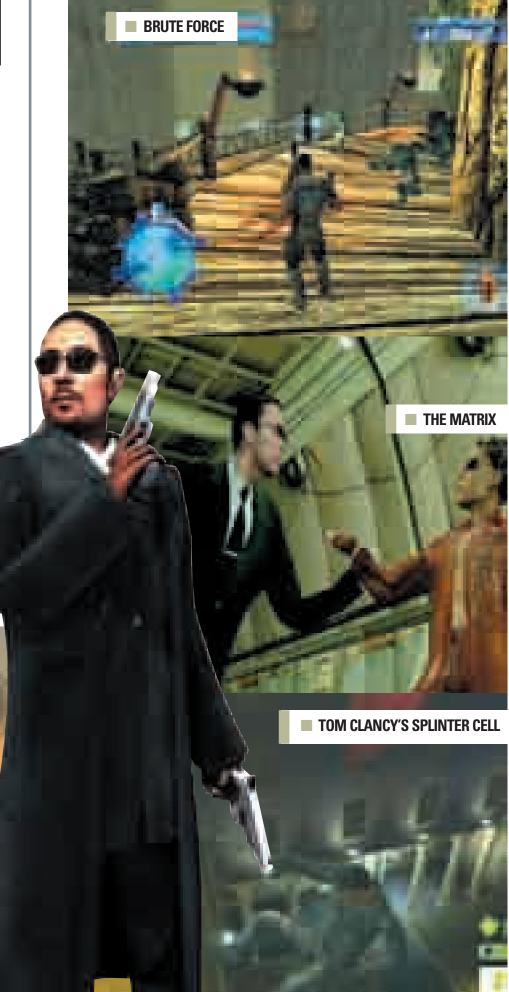
TOTAL NET SALES



UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Enter The Matrix	Atari	Multi
2	SOCOM: US Navy Seals	SCEE	PS2
3	The Sims: Superstar	EA Games	PC
4	Brute Force	Microsoft	Xbox
5	The Hulk	Vivendi	Multi
6	Midnight Club II	Rockstar	Multi
7	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar	PS2, PC
8	The Sims	EA Games	Multiformat
9	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Multiformat
10	Def Jam Vendetta	EA Sports	PS2

■ Unsurprisingly Atari's *Enter the Matrix* is still in the number one spot and has beaten off firm competition from the likes of *SOCOM* and *The Sims: Superstar*. This month's biggest surprise, however, is the fact that *Brute Force* has managed to blaze its way into the top four – firm proof that Microsoft's console is finally getting accepted.



BRUTE FORCE

THE MATRIX

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL



GTA: VICE CITY

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM



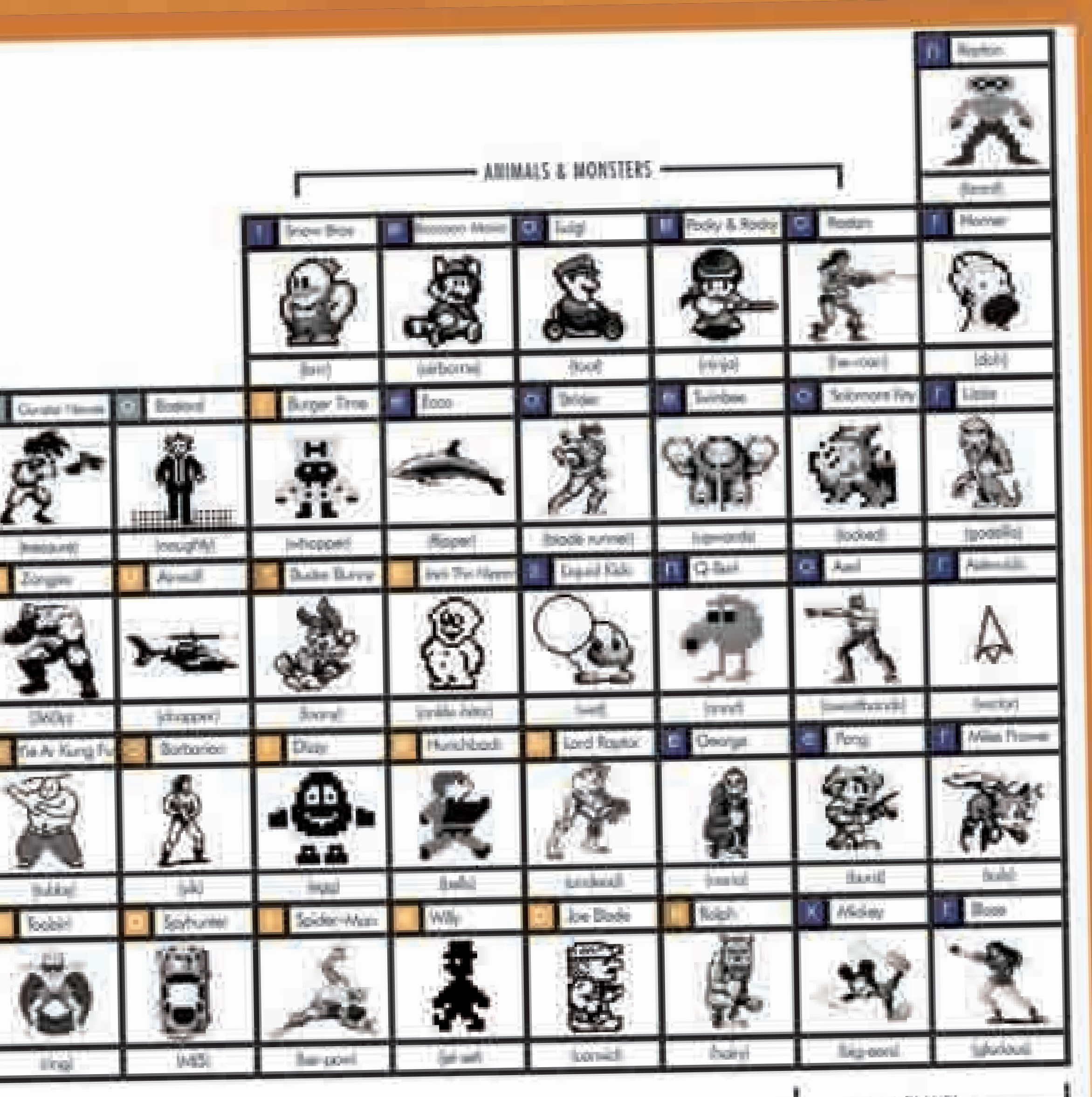
PERIODIC TABLE OF 2D HISTORY

BY PROF. L. ALBIGES

ODD CREATURES AND BEASTIES

PEOPLE

ANIMAL OR VEGETABLE



In the beginning, there were sprites. A relatively simple race, these sprites were basically little more than a collection of coloured dots grouped together to represent a person, an item… anything at all, in fact. As time passed, the sprites grew in strength and numbers and it wasn't long before the entire gaming world was at their mercy. Nobody can pin down the exact moment at which the 3D race began but its consequences are clear for all to see. The once proud 2D culture now lies in ruins, trampled into the dirt by a polygon-hungry public who may not even realise the devastating results of their actions until it's too late. Is this really a just swan song for a fundamental gaming institution? Of course not, but what can we as gamers possibly do to save it? Aside from buying every single sprite-based title that falls onto the shelves regardless of quality, it may already be too late.

The reason these questions are being asked now is simple – ever since the PSone first brought polygons into the console mainstream in 1996, the many faces of the Game Boy (and, in

Like it or not, we are the 3D generation. With each wave of successively more powerful hardware, developers grow less inclined to make two-dimensional games for a public obsessed with shadow casting and ragdoll physics. Is there still room in the industry for 2D games and the developers who dare to be different? To whom or what can we attribute the steady demise of a crucial part of gaming heritage? **games™** sheds its Z-axis and investigates…



fact, other similar handhelds) have become the last bastion for 2D gaming. Now, though, this has been thrown into doubt by Sony's announcement that next year will see the release of its portable powerhouse, the PSP. Hardware limitations that previously restricted the power of handheld consoles are becoming a thing of the past and as the price of technology continues to fall, it looks as though mobile gaming will soon be flooded with 3D games. As well as things like GBA *Doom* and the GP32 paving the way for the influx of extra-dimensional titles, even mobile phones like Nokia's N-Gage will soon be able to boast true 3D games, and by then it may be past the point of no return for sprites. In fact, some have gone as far as to say Sony will be killing off 2D for a second time…

But did the PlayStation really kill 2D? Well, yes and no – the console itself is undoubtedly responsible for introducing gaming to a new audience, many of whom are oblivious to (or just unaware of) the merits of sprites, but it was far from the first games machine to push polygons. Even before polygons, games had been trying to create 3D environments for years. The isometric viewpoint was introduced in early 8-bit games for this very reason and was later taken to the next level by a wave of titles like *Doom* and *Duke Nukem 3D* that sported into-the-screen gameplay but were still heavily reliant on sprites. Before the PlayStation was even launched, just about every console in the previous generation had at least one title that claimed to be 3D, so if anything, Sony was simply an easy scapegoat for a generation of gamers who refused to let go of the past.

Of course, this isn't strictly true, but the console that turned gaming into an acceptable pastime seems to have done so at a price, and two-dimensional gaming has been an unfortunate victim. After a very 3D-oriented launch consisting mainly of titles to show what the hardware could do, developers became wise to the fact that polygons sell and, it would appear, have yet to look back. In today's market, it takes a brave firm to put out a new 2D game and sales figures often reflect this. Recent remakes of classics like *Mega Man* and *Contra* – which would most likely have been huge sellers not so long ago – have failed to capture the hearts of an audience more interested in bump-mapping and depth of field effects. Let's not forget these are established franchises too, so it's plain to see why original side-on titles are seldom released today. "We were offered four times more money to do 3D stuff," explains Jon Hare, formerly of Sensible Software, speaking of the firm's transition from Amiga to PC games "In a nutshell, 2D has waned because the majority of people make their money in the computer games industry from producing contemporary technological products, not creative masterpieces."

The crazy thing is that many of the gamers who refuse to acknowledge the importance of 2D wouldn't be playing today's games if it weren't for a flat link somewhere in the evolutionary chain.

"THE MARKET DICTATES CONTENT SO MU

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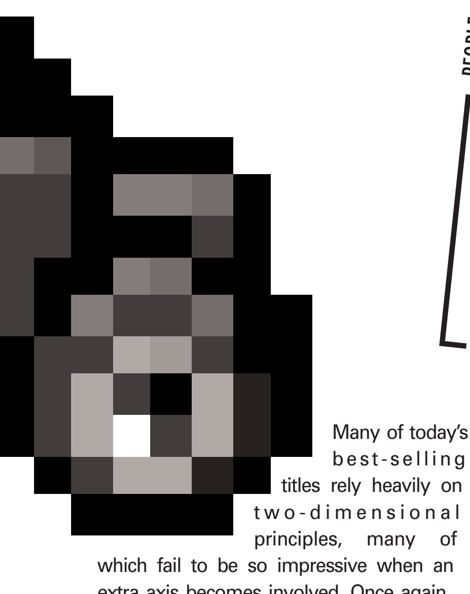
Ryu

[had-o-ken]

RYU'S POLYGON HELL

EVEN THE WORLD'S BEST-LOVED FIGHTER CAN'T CUT IT IN 3D…

Precise. Responsive. Stylish. Three words that encapsulate the magic of the hugely popular 2D *Street Fighter* games, but by stark contrast three words that should never be used in the same sentence as *Street Fighter Ex*. It should have been simple – the *Ex* games feature little to no three-dimensional elements outside the visuals so why do they fare so badly next to their flat brethren? The answer lies in not one reason but a conspiracy of flaws – from lengthy animations that dull response times to an increasingly outlandish cast and moves list, a multitude of problems plagued the pseudo-3D games. But would these problems be considered inherent in all 3D fighters or have we just picked out a particularly bad example? A little of each; we've seen the likes of the *Virtua Fighter* and *Soul Blade* series continue to improve with each instalment in terms of response and connection but still they can't quite compare with the cream of the 2D crop in these fields. The way things are going now, it shouldn't be long before the two are on even ground, but the lesson here is that the amount of effort required just to achieve the same level of accuracy with an extra dimension is notably higher than it may first appear.



Many of today's best-selling titles rely heavily on two-dimensional principles, many of which fail to be so impressive when an extra axis becomes involved. Once again, Hare is quick to validate this. "The control that a 2D game environment gives you means that I will always find it preferable, even if the graphics are all totally 3D," he claims, and we're inclined to agree. But, as the man behind *Sensible Soccer* and *Cannon Fodder* is quick to point out: "The market dictates content so much that true artists are not allowed to express themselves. It's like sitting John Lennon down and saying, 'Look, I know you and George are dying to mess around with that sitar but if you don't get it together soon and produce another *I Wanna Hold Your Hand* then we're gonna pull your f**king contract'." Quite. Even so, games that appear fully 3D are not always so far removed from past creations…

Exhibit A: *Grand Theft Auto*. The third instalment in the series was heralded as a revelation on its PS2 release in 2001 but upon closer inspection, the three-dimensional presentation offered little extra in terms of gameplay over the top-down crime romps that had laid its foundations. It wasn't until *Vice City* that the true potential was realised, allowing the player to take to the skies and finally put the third dimension to good use. This in itself raises yet another question, though – what is meant by 2D? By its very nature, a two-dimensional title must have movement on no more than two axes. By that token, *Micro Machines*, *Fatal Fury* and even *Golden Axe* are, strictly speaking, three-dimensional to some extent due to one or more elements involved. Similarly, it works the other way round and in a technique that seems to be becoming more popular, polygon-rendered games can have strictly 2D gameplay. Mixing modern graphics with a more simplistic (and therefore easier to program well) structure is an obvious recipe for success but recent sales of titles like *Contra: Shattered Soldier* hardly reflects this.

An interesting comparison to make is that of 3D gaming with DVD. Sales of VHS video had been slowing for some time before DVD was introduced, encouraging punters to part with extra cash for effectively the same product with a few enhancements. It worked. The situation is obviously a little different but the principle is the same – could 3D be seen as a fad in much the same way? Given the hype that surrounded the non-event that was Virtual Reality we'd say it was a definite possibility, but with developers now having to make games 3D in order for them to be profitable, a turnaround is unlikely until such a time as graphical quality between any two titles is indistinguishable. Conversely, true three-dimensional gaming is still relatively young, and seeing as how sprites ruled supreme since the dawn of home videogames to the end of the 16-bit era, we'd predict a good few years of polygonal rule before any major shake-ups.

It's not all about the visuals, though. Sound has advanced alongside every other aspect of the industry and the advent of Dolby Digital and Pro Logic II has shown that well-implemented audio can bring an extra level of immersion to almost any 3D game. This is something that is unusable in a two-dimensional environment and as such is of great benefit to modern developers in distinguishing their new products from the games of yesteryear. That's not to write off 2D at all, but when another product can actually put you in the action, there's a lot to contend with. Clearly not everyone has the necessary equipment to take advantage of these advances but then again,

UCH THAT TRUE ARTISTS AREN'T ALLOWED TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES"

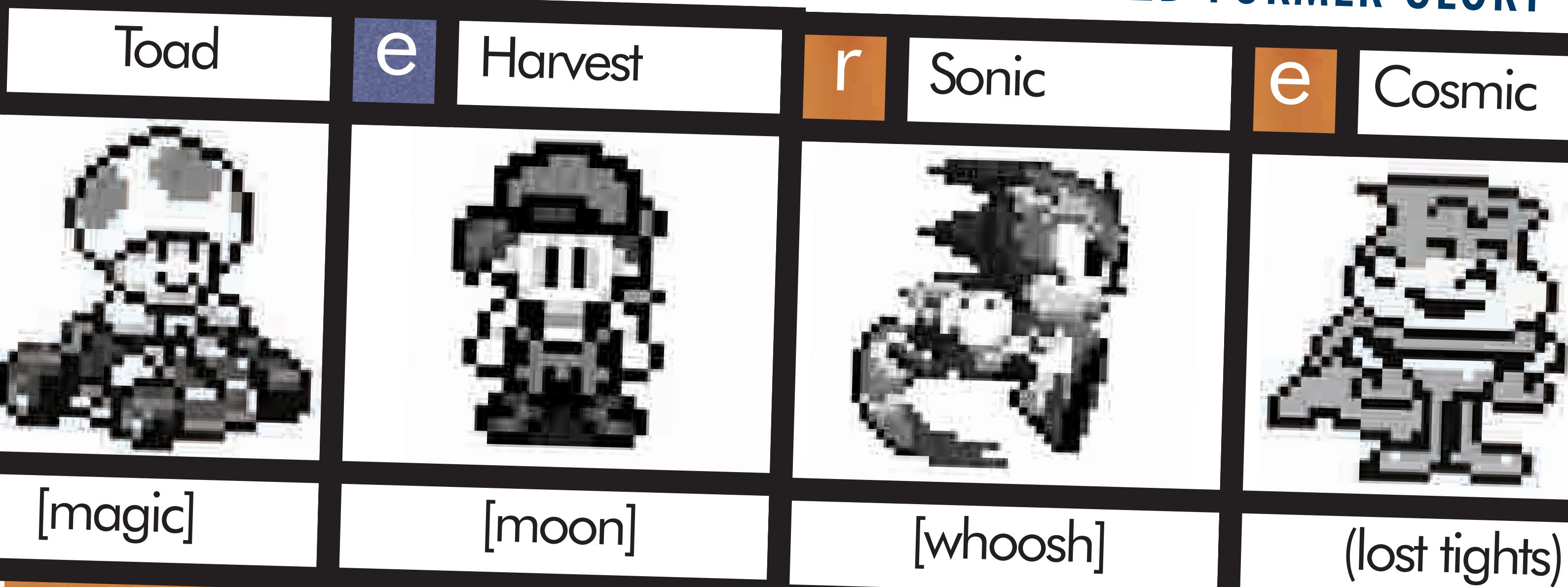
several years ago DVD was seen as just another gimmick set to go the way of Betamax.

Control is a similar issue – very few games have managed to match their scope and scale with the level of tight control synonymous with the cream of the 2D crop. We're fully aware that the job of programming within this extra dimension is much more difficult but this rates as a notable bonus in favour of the sprites once again. Similarly, cameras in fully rendered games are often horribly flawed and we've yet to see a fully 3D game with what could be called a perfect camera (excluding first-person viewpoints, naturally). Granted, several have come close but with so many easy ways out such as fixed and manual cameras, the impetus is often shifted away from this area in favour of another. Such are the difficulties of working in a fully three-dimensional environment though. These are not excuses, nor should they be used as such, but these areas that are often somewhat lacking just make a good game that much sweeter when done well. It does still raise the question of aptitude, though – even with 3D having a firm grip on the market, it's amazing that more genres like platform games, which by their natures simply work better in 2D, aren't appropriately represented.

Of course, some genres are still managing to keep sprites alive. Most notably, beat-'em-ups continue to fly in the face of adversity and time certainly isn't being as cruel to them as the dominance of 3D would suggest. The likes of *Soul Calibur* and *Virtua Fighter* have now fully embraced their third dimensions but there are still those that refuse to 'grow up' – Sammy's *Guilty Gear* series, for example, may not be the most incredible fighters the world has ever known but they certainly show that it isn't technical matters that have forced 2D games into hiding. The most recent title sported gorgeous hi-res character sprites which, coupled with animation of the high standard many Dreamcast beat-'em-ups reached, just make the fact that many developers go for 3D without even considering the options that much more saddening. This isn't just the voice of bitterness and stubbornness either – the fact that 2D is being killed off is a crying shame for much more than just sentimental reasons.

Switch on your television and you'll probably see more examples of the 3D revolution at work. Even in movies and animation, there's a growing tendency to use CG in the place of sets or hand-drawn characters and it certainly isn't doing these other media much good either. One of the main criticisms levelled at box office smash *The Matrix Reloaded* was that the reliance on special effects made it that much less believable and more like a cartoon, losing the impact that made the original so special. The same is evident elsewhere – hand-drawn characters or settings often have a certain charm that is nigh-on impossible to capture digitally. As is the case with the extra difficulty in programming a 3D game, rendered characters or

"A RETURN TO 2D FORMER GLORY



DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

SOME THINGS SIMPLY CAN'T BE DONE WITHOUT THAT THIRD DIMENSION

As vilified as 3D may be among old-school gaming purists, there can be little denying the fact that mere sprites simply aren't capable of reproducing some of the more extraordinary polygonal feats. A good example of this would be the *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* games – the huge free-roaming areas couldn't be successfully recreated without the all-important third dimension. We're not those elitists that denounce 3D at every possible juncture, though. While we are saddened by the lack of 2D games these days, games like *Halo, Resident Evil* and, of course, *Tony Hawk* simply could not be replicated (or even attempted) in true 2D. The same can be said for the first-person genre in general – logic dictates that a game that is played through the eyes of a character must be three-dimensional. Having said that, even pioneering first-person games like *Wolfenstein* were fundamentally 2D (the player could not look up or down and there was very little z-axis movement). It just goes to show that whether a game is two- or three-dimensional is not always as clear-cut as it may seem.

locations need that extra effort (and therefore cost) to stop them looking cheap or lazy, especially given the quality of visuals we've already seen from this generation of consoles. "What the public probably do not realise is how much games designers are compromised," Hare says of current gaming hardware. "You only have to look at the huge gaps in most games between their intro videos and their in-game action to understand this." Either way, Joe Public doesn't take too kindly to rendered visuals that could be shown up simply by switching on an Xbox.

Feel free to draw your own conclusions, but as far as we can tell, there are very obvious gaps in the market that only 2D titles could ever fill. Very few people can claim not to be disappointed with the news that the next *Castlevania* game is to be 3D (especially after the excellent GBA games and less impressive N64 efforts), and if there's a gamer out there who would openly object to a new 2D *Sonic* or *Mario* game, we'll collect enough rings to save the Mushroom Kingdom ourselves. It's not only the existing series and their legacies either – we'd welcome a brand new 2D franchise and strongly believe that a good enough game with the right kind of backing could convince other companies that there's more to life than polygons. Any takers? We didn't think so…

Realistically speaking, we're fully aware of just how horrendously unlikely this would be and as such we're already assuming crash positions for at least five years of attempted photo-realism to be shattered by clipping problems, artificial unintelligence and even more glaringly unrealistic elements. But with the rate at which technology renders itself obsolete, it won't be too long before the naked eye isn't able to differentiate between two multi-million-polygon concoctions, and what then? Will gamers come crawling back to sprites for a break from tireless photo-realism or will it be time for something entirely new to take over, sending polygons the way they sent 2D? It's an interesting notion but it's hard to imagine anything overthrowing the polygon soon – having seen VR disappear as quickly as it was proclaimed the future of gaming, we're sceptical of anything similar coming out of nowhere to rule supreme. No, with the continuing advances in 2D technology showcased over the past few years (hi-res sprites, stunning animation and even 2.5D, heralded by Hare as "the best hope for 2D-style game design"), we'd say a return to former glory is a definite possibility when 3D inevitably consumes itself. Until such an opportunity presents itself, however, we're predicting at least a few more tough years for all things sprite-based. We can only hope the art form is kept alive until the world can fully appreciate it once more.

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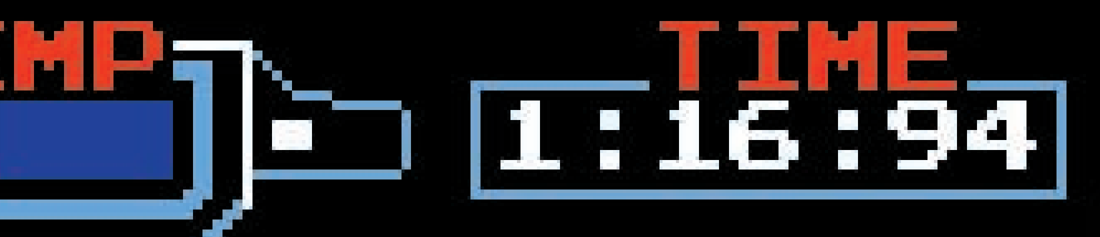
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IS A DEFINITE POSSIBILITY WHEN 3D INEVITABLY CONSUMES ITSELF"





Where's Evil Knievel when you need him? **Excitebike NES [Nintendo] 1984**


TIME
1:16:94

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

CAN THE PRINCE OF THE 2D PLATFORMER BECOME KING OF THE 3D REALM?

PS2 **The original *Prince Of Persia* took the gaming world by storm back in 1989 and cemented its place among the defining titles of its era.** At the heart of the game's timeless charm was some truly innovative gameplay, decorated with never-before-seen attention to detail in character animation. The success of the licence continued into the Nineties, spawning countless ports and the inevitable sequel, before time took its toll on the Prince and a miserable attempt to translate his adventures into 3D seemingly put the saga to rest. But now Ubi Soft is mounting a more ambitious attempt to resurrect his fortunes. And from what we've seen so far, *The Sands Of Time* could see the franchise returning to the top of its genre.

The gameplay experts behind *Splinter Cell* have clearly gone back to the roots of *POP*'s original success and tried to achieve a similar level of inventiveness as we saw 14 years ago. Of course, these days the technological stakes are much higher and the 3D game a far more difficult beast to conquer, but the gameplay Ubi has managed to create so far is little short of remarkable. The Prince's mesmerising array of acrobatic abilities carries echoes of Sam Fisher, but along a far more *Matrix*-esque theme of gravity defiance. Controls are amazingly intuitive and performing a string of incredible feats with grace and fluidity had us feeling like instant experts.

In addition to a strong gymnastic repertoire, our hero also benefits from the mysterious power of the Sands of Time. Further inspired by the *Matrix* universe, a limited supply of sand grants players the rather nifty ability to influence the passage of time. The Power of Delay, for instance, activates an ancient equivalent of bullet-time that gives the Prince a better chance of using his skills to evade moving traps or enemy attacks. The Power of Haste is also surprisingly useful for accelerating time; the Power of Destiny foresees your treacherous path ahead, while The Power of Restraint will suspend an adversary in time leaving them at the mercy of your blade.

Perhaps the most welcome property of the magical grains, however, has to be The Power of Revival which allows players to rewind time several seconds – ideally to the point before the Prince went plummeting to his death. This combines with some forgiving gameplay dynamics to remove the frustration factor you'd generally associate with the platform genre. Whilst players should still find their skills pushed to the limit, accidentally stumble off a ledge and the Prince will instinctively grab onto it for dear life.

Once again the animation lends proceedings a 'wow' factor that sets the game apart from anything we've seen before. The trademark attention to detail seen in the Prince's first outing again outshines today's standards with a realism and flow that makes his every movement ooze sheer class. Fittingly accompanied by lifelike sound effects, some exceptionally rich textures and environmental touches like the kicking up of dust bring the action to life with unrivalled thoroughness.

Although there are one or two minor issues with the camera to be ironed out before the scheduled release, rarely have we seen such an early version of a game look so polished. From the exquisite gameplay and sublime presentation already in place, this is one title we're getting very, very excited about.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, GC, PC, GBA
ORIGIN: Canada
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER: Ubi Soft Montreal
RELEASE: November '03
GENRE: Action/Platform
PLAYERS: 1

■ It's all about gameplay and dazzling visuals as the Prince looks set to revolutionise platform gaming all over again.

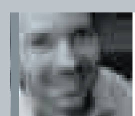
THE ART OF WAR

The Prince's instantly accessible repertoire of moves makes him a slippery customer for enemies to deal with. The fluent dodging and weaving moves combined with devastating strikes make satisfyingly light work of the armies of mutants cursed by the Sands of Time. Backed into a corner by a gang of multiple foes you may choose to run up the wall, backflip over your assailants and regain control of the situation. Activating The Power of Delay allows you to admire the entertaining spectacle in all the glory of slow motion, which adds greater drama to the Prince's exploits.

"THE GAMEPLAY UBI SOFT HAS MANAGED TO CREATE IS LITTLE SHORT OF REMARKABLE"



■ All the visual effects we've seen so far have been really quite remarkable.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

While studying at Yale University, Jordan Mechner designed his first hit game, *Karateka*, in 1984. It went on to sell half a million copies worldwide, but was eclipsed in 1989 by gaming phenomenon *Prince Of Persia*. Mechner most recently consulted on *The Sands Of Time*, as well as penning the storyline.

HISTORY

- **PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D** 1999 [PC]
- **PRINCE OF PERSIA 2** 1993 [Multi]
- **PRINCE OF PERSIA** 1989 [Multi]

Finishing moves are important, or floored enemies will just keep coming back to bother you…

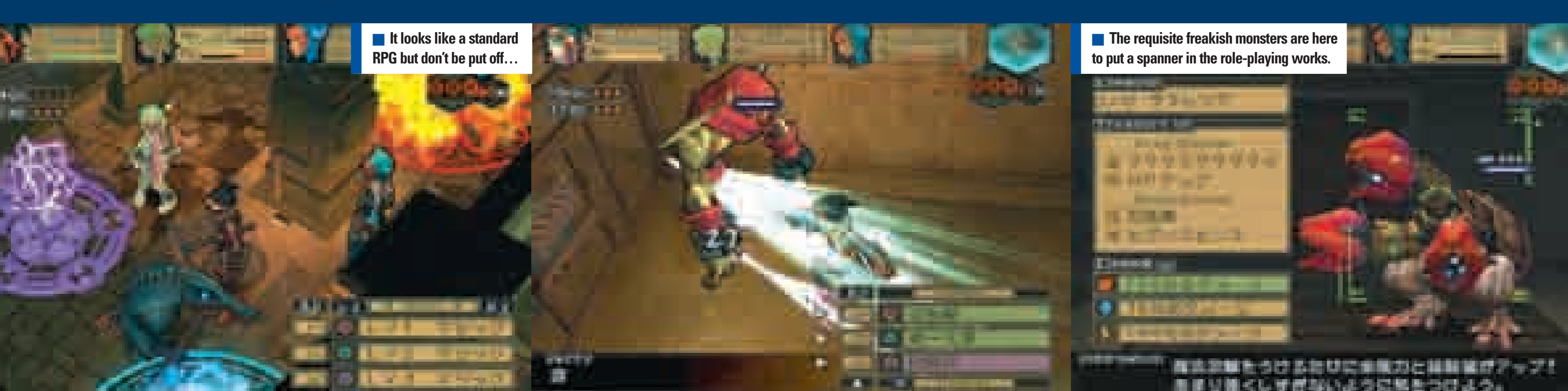
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

THE SECRET OF EASTERN PROMISE

PRINCE OF PERSIA + 3D x GYMNASTICS = PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

The Prince will have to look out for all sorts of enemies now, not just Harryhausen skeletons.

BREATH OF FIRE: DRAGON QUARTER



It looks like a standard RPG but don't be put off…

The requisite freakish monsters are here to put a spanner in the role-playing works.

CAPCOM'S DRAGON-FILLED EPIC REACHES ITS FIFTH INSTALMENT

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q3 '03 (Japan/US: Out now)
GENRE: RPG
PLAYERS: 1

An original and enjoyable battle system meets the classic fantasy action that has sustained this series for ten years. The results are spectacular…

In terms of videogame clichés, the RPG genre must surely be the worst affected area. From spiky hair and dragons to saving princesses, countless role-playing games have been marred from the off by horribly familiar settings or narratives. That's not to say innovation is non-existent, of course – while complacency and hackneyed plots may be commonplace, there are still those that dare to be different. Be it attempting to reinvent the genre or incorporating just one or two unique features, anything original can help a game's cause, and even though *Dragon Quarter* falls nearer the latter of the two (it is the fifth game in the series, after all), it does have some rather neat tricks up its proverbial sleeve.

Anyone who's come into contact with the series over the years will know that it's centred on a boy with the ability to transform into a dragon – an ability that is often shrouded until a little way into each game. This outing is no exception, so you'll quickly need to get to grips with the game's trump card – an excellent and complex battle system. This involves spending an allotted number of Action Points on free movement and combat which, in itself, is no real innovation; it's not until you start to put the engine through its paces that you realise its true potential.

"IT'S REFRESHING TO FIND A GAME THAT ISN'T AFRAID TO OFFER A CHALLENGE"

Linking various abilities and moves together will be the key to victory, although Capcom has integrated a somewhat nasty surprise for those who have previously relied heavily on dragon transformations to make progress through the game. Without wanting to blow this wide open, you'll be limited as to how much you can use this ability, but fear not, the game doesn't suffer for it, in fact, quite the opposite.

Even after fairly limited exposure to *Dragon Quarter*, you'll quickly become aware that it isn't an easy game. Save points are relatively hard to come by (as are the tokens required to record your data) although 'quick saves' (that are removed when loaded) are possible at any time. Even battles themselves are often very tough, forcing you to use evasive tactics that often exist as a formality in this genre – the best gamers will probably suffer a few losses.

It has to be said, though, that it's refreshing to find a game that isn't afraid to offer a challenge rather than relying on its extreme length to pass as difficulty. It'll do us good to see a Game Over screen once in a while…



Don't buy this expecting a walk in the park – the difficulty's been upped to 11…


eMag

BLACK & WHITE 2



"YOUR CREATURE CAN LEARN STRATEGIES, LEAD ARMIES INTO BATTLE AND IS THE ULTIMATE BATTLEFIELD WEAPON HIMSELF"
EA PRESS RELEASE

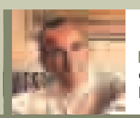
VIDEOGAMES MATHS
THIS TIME IT'S WAR

BLACK & WHITE + NEW ENGINE x WARFARE = BLACK & WHITE 2

■ Good luck trying to bring down that Creature with a few flimsy arrows. Looks like you're gonna need a bigger army…

■ *Black & White 2* gives you more power than ever over shaping your Creature and training it into a mighty instrument of war.

BLACK & WHITE 2
PC



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Peter Molyneux's Bullfrog studios debuted with the hugely successful god sim *Populous* in 1989, and continued to impress throughout the Nineties with the likes of *Theme Park* and *Dungeon Keeper*. In 1997 Molyneux founded Lionhead studios and had us all playing god again with the incredible *Black & White*.

HISTORY

- **BLACK & WHITE** 2001 [PC]
- **THEME PARK** 1994 [PC, Multi]
- **POPULOUS** 1989 [Amiga, Multi]

EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD, BUT SOME PEOPLE ARE OBSESSED WITH THE IDEA…

He may have come in for a bit of stick from certain esteemed industry experts for the rather recurrent subject matter of his creations, but those same gaming gurus would be the first to hail Peter Molyneux as master of his chosen field. No doubt ripe for some interesting Freudian analysis, our Pete was not only responsible for pioneering the whole god gaming concept with inventive masterpiece *Populous*, but persists to this day in his quest to devise the ultimate deity simulation. Although his efforts can be pigeonholed easily, few game designers possess the wit or wisdom to pull off such ambitious feats of gameplay and you'd be hard pressed to find anyone more capable of taking the genre to new heights.

Black & White 2 attempts to do just that, and unsurprisingly sees the god of all god games inviting players to take the role of an all-powerful entity once again. Building on the phenomenal success of its predecessor – that's *Black & White*, not *Populous* – this outing looks set to provide power-hungry mortals with their most fulfilling taste of supremacy yet. As with the original, the objective will be to increase the size of your following, thus expanding the realm of your almighty influence. How you get the populous, sorry – populace – to worship you and respect your power is entirely at your discretion. Performing wondrous miracles and building villages with a high quality of living will usually be the path of the righteous deity, but never underestimate the power of the dark side. The tempting ability to convert villagers by terrorising them into submission with evil acts is less moral, but nevertheless effective.

One of the major new additions to *B&W2* is the much greater focus on warfare between your followers and those of competing gods. Adding further diversity to the strategies of good and evil rulers, those with darker inclinations may spread their influence by amassing an army to take neighbouring civilisations by force whilst the more honourable deity will inspire their flock to build rather than destroy. Many new buildings, including taverns and schools, can be constructed by those whose masterplan involves winning the population's hearts. Create a city that's the envy of your neighbours and they're likely to defect to your religion, placing more believers under your control. Of course, hefty fortifications must also be erected if your citizens are to remain safe from the minions of hostile gods.

Whether in the role of aggressor or defender, players are sure to witness plenty of the game's battle dynamics. In an effort to achieve a far more epic feel to the game, thousands of soldiers can now fall under your command. The giant Creature you train to perform your bidding in the mortal realm will obviously play a key part in the war effort, and can be taught various battle strategies to lead your troops in the fray. The graphical engine has been completely overhauled to achieve the visual flair enjoyed by the original – terrain and weather effects are outstanding, while character animations and scrupulous attention to detail clearly show the game's intentions to become another classic.

By evolving the already definitive god sim in every way, *B&W2* looks sure to keep Molyneux at the head of the genre he created.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: Lionhead Studios
RELEASE: TBA '04
GENRE: God Sim
PLAYERS: 1 (Multiplayer online)

■ Amass a following of worshippers by righteously earning their prayers or conquering their lands with an army of evil minions.

WHITER SHADE OF PALE

Black & White 2 **brings a much more visual depiction of your chosen path to proceedings, making the route you are choosing to tread strikingly obvious to see. Everything a squeaky-clean deity touches will blossom with flowers and generally emit pure beauty, whereas the land of an evil ruler will be a blackened, twisted place shrouded in foul mists. Your monstrous pet Creature will perhaps be the most obvious embodiment of your inclination towards the light or dark side, with their appearance, movement and facial expressions progressively illustrating your actions with incredible detail.**

"THIS OUTING SHOULD PROVIDE POWER-HUNGRY MORTALS WITH THEIR MOST FULFILLING TASTE OF SUPREMACY YET"



■ Wannabe gods should get a suitably epic feeling of power from the monstrous armies you are able to command.

ARMED & DANGEROUS

YOU'LL LAUGH, YOU'LL CRY AND APPARENTLY YOU'LL FIRE AROUND 12,000 BULLETS…

Comedy can be hard to get right in a videogame, so when a title professes to be 'humorous' we never know whether to expect a showcase of wit or cringe-worthy blunders. That is, of course, unless the project has LucasArts at the helm. The creators of *Sam And Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle* can usually be counted on to deliver a subtly balanced sense of humour with the odd moment of satirical genius. Combine this well-honed expertise with the wry minds at Planet Moon – another development team to have earned our applause for the quality of its in-game humour – and you can almost guarantee joint undertaking *Armed & Dangerous* will end up on the winning side of the comedy gamble.

The enticing developer partnership also promises to live up to its collective track record in terms of appealing gameplay and imaginatively unique settings. In *A&D* players will step into the bizarre fantasy world of Milola and take charge of an unlikely bunch of heroes known as the Lionhearts. Led by cockney criminal mastermind Roman, the mismatched crew of no-hopers embark on what should be the greatest heist of all time but soon become embroiled in a rebellion to overthrow the evil dictator of their mythical land. Ultimately the team must brave unthinkable dangers in order to get their hands on the elusive Book of Rule, which allegedly prophesises the king's demise and has the power to free the citizens of Milola from the oppression of his regime.

It would be quite a feat for even the most valiant team of warriors, and it seems even harder when you look at the state of Roman's oddball brothers in arms. Jonesy is an embittered Scottish mole with a valuable knowledge of demolitions and a penchant for sarcasm, Q1-11 is a powerful yet absurdly debonair eliminator droid, and then there's Rexus – a once mighty sage reduced to his current pitiful state by a nasty bop to the head.

For a so-called criminal mastermind, Roman's cunning plan to steal the world's most prized artefact leaves a lot to be desired. Far from a meticulous in-and-out stealth job, the Lionhearts' approach will be to plough their way straight through the several thousand enemies intent on stopping them at all costs. The promo line promises victory in 12,000 bullets or less, and with the OTT action firmly locked in the game's light-hearted vein of humour, *Hitman 2* this most certainly ain't.

Unashamedly advocating the sole strategy of all-out attack, *A&D* looks set to deliver a mountain of thrills and spills that will tax the fingers rather than the brain. Exaggerated explosions, weaponry and enemy numbers should make for a blockbuster spectacle of carnage and lead to a body count that'll make Rambo look like covert operative Sam Fisher. In a pink frilly dress.

The 21 missions of trigger-happy action will be spread over five diverse environments around Milola, and look sure to provide an immensely entertaining dose of gratuitous fun. Although we're unlikely to be wowed by cutting-edge visuals, the breathtaking gameplay and absurd humour are likely to pack a decent punch on their own. It's still early days in terms of details, but from what we've seen so far, *A&D* might be the surprise in LucasArts' line-up of major titles this year.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: LucasArts
DEVELOPER: Planet Moon/LucasArts
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: Shoot-'em-up
PLAYERS: TBA

Lead a ragtag crew of hapless heroes against impossible odds in this light-hearted, all-action bulletfest.

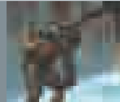
SHAKE THINGS UP

Those horrendously larger-than-life explosions don't just cause themselves you know, and the weaponry on offer in *Armed & Dangerous* unsurprisingly arms players with some rather dangerous pieces of kit. Without a silencer in sight, the Lionhearts come tooled up to make mincemeat of the king's legions of lethal guardians. Arguably the most intriguing of the bunch has to be the bizarre Topsy-Turvy bomb, which sees players thrust a giant corkscrew-type contraption into the ground and hang on for dear life as the world is momentarily turned on its head, sending everyone else skyward and bringing your enemies crashing down to earth with an almighty thud seconds later when the scene returns to normal.

"THE BODY COUNT MAKES RAMBO LOOK LIKE COVERT OPERATIVE SAM FISHER. IN A FRILLY DRESS"



While most of the action will involve running around causing mayhem, certain missions will require you to defend fortifications against invading hordes.



COMPANY PROFILE

Based in Sausalito, California, Planet Moon Studios was founded in 1997 by a group of former Shiny employees. After spending three years developing *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*, the studio was joined by the sixth and final member of the team behind *MDK* from Shiny to work on the *Armed & Dangerous* project.

HISTORY

- **GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO** 2002 [PS2]
- **GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO** 2000 [PC]

The game's diverse environments are set to include snowy terrain, scenic mountain regions and deep forests

The foes you'll encounter along the way will range from half-man, half-animal grunts through to psychopathic eliminator droids.

The weapons you'll see Roman and his cronies wielding throughout the game are certainly impressive but nothing short of absurd.

"A&D BLENDS AN EXPLOSIVE STORYLINE AND OVER-THE-TOP BULLET-SPRAYING ACTION WITH A TWIST OF HUMOUR"

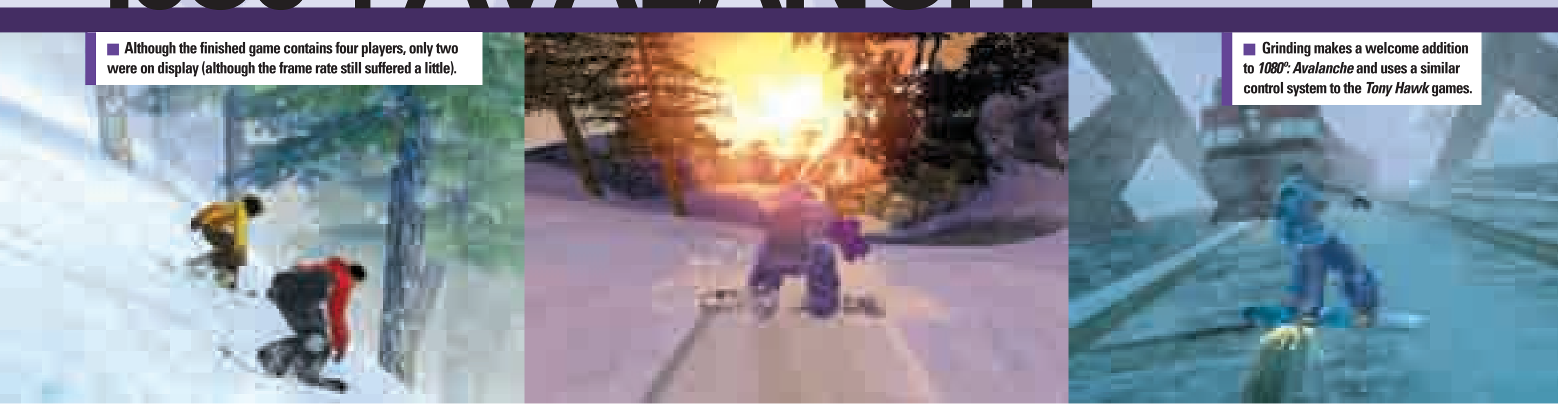
LIZ ALLEN, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, LUCASARTS

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

OVER-BLOWN BLOWING UPS

RAMBO + HUMOUR x EXAGGERATION = ARMED & DANGEROUS

1080°: AVALANCHE



Although the finished game contains four players, only two were on display (although the frame rate still suffered a little).

Grinding makes a welcome addition to *1080°: Avalanche* and uses a similar control system to the *Tony Hawk* games.

WHY SPEED AROUND SKATE PARKS WHEN YOU CAN HURTLE DOWN MOUNTAINS?

Nintendo's *1080°: Snowboarding*'s ride to the GameCube has been as treacherous as the impressively drawn slopes that the game's riders race down. Originally shown at 2001's Space World (under the moniker *White Storm*) and developed by Left Field, it was eventually handed over to NST, the developers of the original game and *Wave Race: Blue Storm*. A long silence after its E3 2002 showing led many to believe that the game might have been canned. Fortunately, however, this year's E3 proved that not only is *Avalanche* still on its way, but that the delay looks like it will definitely be worth it…

Looking at the surrounding screenshots, the first thing you'll notice is a general lack of textures and detail – by comparison, the ageing *Amped* on the Xbox looks more appealing. Watching those boarders in motion though, is another matter entirely. Animation throughout is superb, with each participant looking simply wonderful as they make their way down the enormous mountainsides.

From the rippling clothing that gets caked in snow to the spray kicked up by each boarder's frantic twists and turns, the overall effect created is utterly convincing – it's clear that NST has done everything in its power to ensure that your snowboarding experience will be second to none.

Unfortunately, the titular avalanches were not actually on show, so we weren't able to judge how much of an impact they will have on *1080°*'s final gameplay, but if NST is able to capture the same fluidity shown in the rest of the game we should be in for a real treat.

Another noticeable aspect was that each race was a relatively straightforward dash from top to bottom, although it's been promised that there will be plenty of alternative routes to find in the final version whenever it arrives.

Gameplay has also been suitably tightened and apart from a few key features it's pretty much the same as the original *1080° Snowboarding* – which is no bad thing. The emphasis has clearly been placed upon realism and, as such, it's a world away from the over-the-top wackiness of the popular *SSX* series.

With two extra players, some impressive environments and plenty of outdoor elements to negotiate, *1080°: Avalanche* is shaping up very nicely indeed – let's just hope it manages to skid into game shops some time before Christmas.

"NST BUILDS ON THE BLUEPRINT OF THE FIRST GAME TO PRODUCE A TITLE THAT'S SET TO OUTSTRIP THE ORIGINAL IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE"

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q4 (US: 29 September)
GENRE: Sports
PLAYERS: 1-4

After numerous pretenders to its crown, Nintendo's *1080°* returns to the slopes and shows the young upstarts how a snowboarding game should really be done…



It may not look amazing, but the impressive draw distance and packed levels mean it's still an eye opener.


eMag

SPACE COLONY



Your colony's inhabitants are an extremely varied bunch, but the wide selection of facilities you can build means all tastes can be catered for.

STRATEGY GAMING TRAVELS TO A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Take 2
DEVELOPER: Firefly Studios
RELEASE: September '03
GENRE: Strategy
PLAYERS: 1

Turning a lifeless rock into a cash cow isn't easy with the most dysfunctional crew in the galaxy.

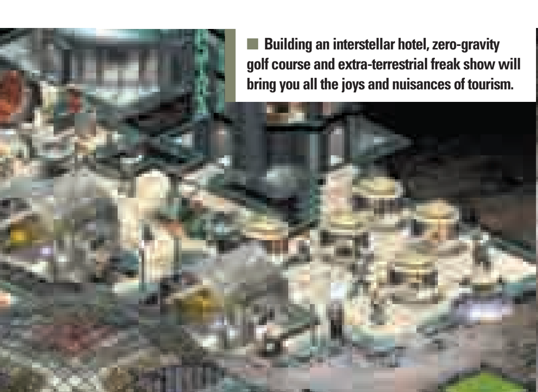
Following the success of the *Stronghold* series, Take 2 has again teamed up with developer Firefly to bring us a rather different strategy game. In a total departure from the bastion-based shenanigans of their comprehensive siege simulator, Firefly is replacing the medieval battlefields with deep space outposts, the armies of gallant knights with a crew of imbeciles, and the rigours of war with a hearty dose of humour.

Combining the familiar art of city building with a heavy focus on people management, *Space Colony* tasks players with putting together a thriving outer-space settlement whilst keeping its temperamental crew of misfits content. A variety of barely habitable planets await the resourceful intergalactic entrepreneur, ripe to be transformed into profitable colonies. Starting by kitting the place out to support human life, each mission has specific objectives for turning the outpost into a booming business. Resources will need gathering to power your growing community, oxygen has to be generated and defensive measures must be taken to keep your investment safe from the grubby tentacles of your hostile alien neighbours.

"ENSURING YOUR CREW'S NEEDS ARE CATERED FOR WILL BE PARAMOUNT TO THE COLONY'S SUCCESS"

While most planets sport harsh landscapes, valuable ores may be lurking deeper within the rock for the business-minded pioneer to exploit. Other worlds may enjoy an abundance of odd wildlife just waiting to be caught and shown to tourists in your very own alien zoo. Turning the settlement into a successful tourist trap will obviously demand a rather different strategy from other business developments, and the 24 scenarios on offer promise a good amount of variety on the colonisation theme.

Whatever the nature of your venture, your staff will ultimately make or break the business. A happy worker is a productive worker, so ensuring their every need is catered for will be paramount to your colony's success. Sadly, the prospect of working on a desolate rock in a far corner of the galaxy doesn't seem to attract the highest calibre of employee. Each crew member displays a unique personality and will require a diverse range of measures to keep them from going insane. It may not be the greatest concept in the universe, but the intriguing character personas and a strong vein of humour might just make *Space Colony* worth a look.



Building an interstellar hotel, zero-gravity golf course and extra-terrestrial freak show will bring you all the joys and nuisances of tourism.



An efficient mining operation could rake in a small fortune for the precious alien ore, providing you can maintain a motivated workforce.




eMag

KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER



Don't be fooled by the cuteness of your enemies, they pack quite a punch.

SHAPE SHIFTING, CREATURE RUSTLING AND RAISING MONSTERS – RARE'S NEW HEROINE IS BUSY

Now that everyone's got over the shock that Microsoft has whisked Rare away from Nintendo, it's time to see if all the money it spent (a rumoured $375 million, or 225 million of your English pounds) was actually worth it… While *Kameo: Elements Of Power* is no longer going to be Rare's debut Xbox title (that credit will now go to *Grabbed By The Ghoulies*), it's still the most well-known of Rare's first trio of games, an honour it's held since being shown at Microsoft's X02 in Seville last year. This year's E3, however, revealed that not only does *Kameo* look every bit the typical Rare title, it's also shaping up to be one of the Xbox's most anticipated games of next year.

After escaping exile, the evil Troll King, Thorn, has started to leave a trail of destruction through young Kameo's world. Obviously perturbed by recent events (especially as her brothers and sisters sacrificed themselves in stone to imprison Thorn), Kameo takes it upon herself to defeat the Troll King and find out the fate of her siblings. What follows is a wonderful sprawling adventure that sees Kameo using her unique ability to morph into other creatures and eventually restore order to her ravaged land.

Rare is no stranger to adventure titles and first impressions of *Kameo* are very strong – think of it as a level-based *Zelda*. Controls are incredibly intuitive as the face buttons are mapped out to the various creatures that Kameo is able to morph into. When playing as Kameo, the left trigger allows her to hover, whilst the right enables her dragon helper, Meepo, to capture creatures; when morphed, both triggers activate a range of special moves depending on which creature is selected.

No adventure would be complete without plenty of puzzles to solve or new routes to find and *Kameo* is no exception. Unsurprisingly, the keys to many of the puzzles and blocked paths can be found courtesy of the many creatures that you'll see on your travels. Other puzzles use a similar approach to *Phantasy Star Online* and simply require you to rid an area of monsters before you can proceed any further. Fortunately, *Kameo*'s combat system is a very solid affair and makes for a refreshing diversion from the collecting theme of the main game.

Rare has always been renowned for getting the most out of whatever platform it's working on and after witnessing the beautiful visuals of the original GameCube version of *Kameo*, it's pleasing to see that Rare is quickly finding its way around Microsoft's console – this is already looking like a high-end Xbox title. One of the most impressive aspects of the visuals is the lushness of Kameo's world. Trees, rocks and plants feature incredibly detailed texturing and, along with the rest of the environment, create a very realistic atmosphere that has been greatly improved since its first showing in Seville.

Lighting is of a much higher standard too, and is most apparent when Kameo is making her way through the game's many forests. Rare's loving touch also extends to the creatures found throughout the game, all of which possess the typical quirky charm that has made the likes of *Banjo Kazooie* and *StarFox Adventures* so popular in the past.

Kameo's delay (it was originally expected in November) should allow Rare to give it that extra bit of polish. Even the disappointment of *Grabbed By The Ghoulies* and *Conker* can't dampen our spirits.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Rare
RELEASE: Q1 '04
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

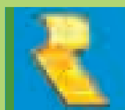
Originally touted as a GameCube title but now on the Xbox, this looks set to inject some much needed life into the Xbox's catalogue of adventure games.

GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL

The crux of *Elements Of Power* is Kameo's ability to collect and raise various creatures. Once fully grown, these monsters can be used to help solve puzzles and enable Kameo to transform into a similar creature to do battle. Each monster is based on one of six elements – Plant, Water, Rock, Ice, Wind or Fire – and all are equipped with their own special attacks. A particular favourite is a golem-like creature that's basically a pile of rocks with eyes; it rolls around hurling boulders (getting smaller as it does so) and can also be used to knock down out-of-reach objects. Rare hasn't said how many monsters will be in the final code, but we know there are at least 18, all able to evolve into other forms. Where's that Pokéball…?

"KAMEO IS SHAPING UP TO BE YET ANOTHER FEATHER IN RARE'S OVERCROWDED CAP"

KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER
XBOX



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Rare first appeared as Ultimate: Play The Game in 1983 and developed a string of successful games. After renaming itself RareWare, it started to develop for the NES and then Nintendo's later consoles. In 2002, after much rumour-mongering, Microsoft bought Rare, which had become Nintendo's most prolific first-party developer.

HISTORY

- **GOLDENEYE** 1997 [N64]
- **DONKEY KONG COUNTRY** 1995 [SNES]
- **JET PAC** 1983 [Spectrum]

■ She may look sweet but underneath this pleasant façade lies a whole personality of different creatures.

"KAMEO REMAINS ONE OF RARE'S KEY GAMES FOR ITS INITIAL FORAY INTO THE XBOX MARKET – WE'RE CONFIDENT AUDIENCES WILL TAKE A SHINE TO IT"
OFFICIAL RARE WEBSITE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

DON'T LET NINTENDO FIND OUT

RARE - NINTENDO x POKÉMON = KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER

■ *Kameo* features some stunning looking visuals with the texturing on these trees looking very realistic.

ONIMUSHA 3



"WE CONSIDER THE WHOLE THING TO HAVE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS TO ONIMUSHA 1 AND 2. WE WANT MORE OF A FOCUS ON ACTION"
KEIJI INAFUNE, CAPCOM

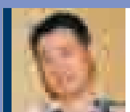
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

FEUDAL JAPAN MEETS MODERN-DAY FRANCE

ONIMUSHA + DEVIL MAY CRY 2 + JEAN RENO = ONIMUSHA 3

Although there's a heavier emphasis on action, *Onimusha* fans should feel right at home with the third game.

Actor Takeshi Kaneshiro is returning to play the role of Samanosuke after being absent from the second game.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Having been at Capcom since the days of the Nintendo Entertainment System, Keiji Inafune is now the head of Production Studio 2. Now famous for developing the *Onimusha* series, he's been involved with many older Capcom projects over the years, and was actually the character designer on *Mega Man*.

HISTORY

- **ONIMUSHA** 2001 [PS2]
- **DUCK TALES** 1990 [NES]
- **MEGA MAN SERIES** Various [Multi]

IS CAPCOM'S ONIMUSHA SERIES TURNING INTO ANOTHER DEVIL MAY CRY 2 CLONE?

PS2 **Over in Japan, Capcom's *Onimusha* series has been a favourite with gamers since 2001 when the first game was released.** The original was, in fact, the first PS2 game to sell more than a million copies there, and now the series has eclipsed *Resident Evil* in terms of popularity. The samurai theme has no doubt helped its success, but in the rest of the world *Onimusha* has never performed quite as well, despite receiving critical acclaim. This time, however, Capcom is going all-out to ensure that *Onimusha 3* is just as popular in Europe as it is in Japan.

Set in two very different locations – the romantic city of Paris and feudal Japan – *Onimusha 3* takes place in the years 1582 and 2004. Akechi Samanosuke, the hero from the original game, makes a comeback, and thanks to a magical storyline involving time travel, the 14th Century samurai warrior gets to set foot in modern-day France. Actor Jean Reno (from the uber-cool *Leon*) has been fully digitised and will be a second playable character, Jacques Blanc, who'll be armed with guns rather than blades, bringing a little variation to the standard hack and slash *Onimusha* formula. However, instead of doing things the *Devil May Cry 2* way and having a separate adventure for each character, both will come into play at various stages of a single adventure that spans geography and time.

Unfortunately, while progression looks set to be similar to the previous two games, it's looking more likely that this will have a greater emphasis on action and combat than story, just like *Devil May Cry 2*. In fact, Keiji Inafune, the general manager of Capcom's Production Studio 2, has gone on record saying: "We consider the whole thing to have different systems to *Onimusha 1* and *2*, without the conversation. We want more of a focus on action." Whether or not that's what the fans want is another question, and we're hoping that the whole experience doesn't turn out to be as uninspired as *Devil May Cry 2*.

Another change for this instalment comes in the form of a fully 3D graphics engine. In the previous two games, all the backgrounds were flat pre-renders that looked very nice, but didn't offer very much freedom for camera control or cinematic movement. Now, however, as Capcom has continued to learn how to work with the complexities of the PS2 architecture, just as many polygons are being used on the character models, with enough power left to draw, texture and light completely 3D scenery. Because of the change, the game will now make use of the twin analog sticks and will handle more like *Devil May Cry* than *Resident Evil*.

Interestingly, Inafune insists that this will be the last instalment in the *Onimusha* series. "I have no intention to create *Onimusha 4*," he's said. "A story must have an ending." Of course, if the third game sells well, you can hardly expect Capcom to sit back when additional profits could be coming in. For the moment though, *Onimusha 3* looks set to offer plenty to do. It may end up being as linear as *Devil May Cry 2* – with talk of cut-scenes being reduced and action making up a large percentage of the game, there's certainly a chance that we may end up disappointed. However, if Capcom gets it right, *Onimusha 3* could turn out to be the highlight of the series.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: 2004 TBC
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Although the presence of Jean Reno hints that this will be quite movie-like, apparently it will rely more on action than cut-scenes.

ALL-STAR CAST

Continuing the trend for featuring the voices of actors in videogames, *Onimusha 3* takes things a step further and not only features the voice of French thesp Jean Reno, but also includes a fully polygonal representation of the man himself. Famous for films such as *Leon* and *La Femme Nikita*, Reno should suit the style of the game perfectly. This isn't the first time real actors have appeared in the *Onimusha* series – the second game brought to life the late Yusaku Matsuda, best known here for starring alongside Michael Douglas in *Black Rain*, and the first game featured Takeshi Kaneshiro as Samanosuke, who reappears in this instalment.

> "THIS WILL HAVE A GREATER EMPHASIS ON ACTION AND COMBAT THAN STORY, JUST LIKE DEVIL MAY CRY 2"



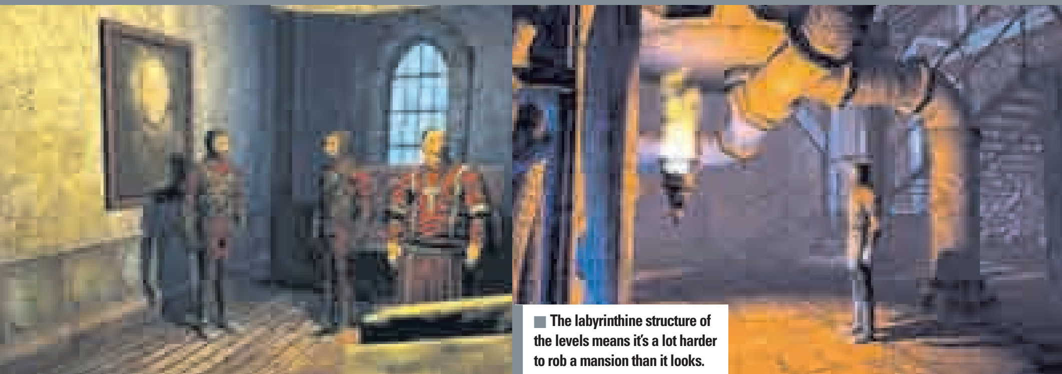
The two playable characters meet in Paris, but just how did Samanosuke travel from 16th Century Japan to modern-day France?

Judging by the early screenshots it would a appear that a range of interesting locations will be included.

THIEF III



Thief III's fantastic lighting means hiding in shadows becomes a breeze.



The labyrinthine structure of the levels means it's a lot harder to rob a mansion than it looks.

THEFT, MURDER AND STEALTH, FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN HOME

Here at games™ we're generally law-abiding individuals – we pay our taxes, don't cause trouble in pubs and even help old ladies across the road. All this niceness can start to grate, however, so when a game comes along that enables us to become a master thief and steal as much as we can carry we're not exactly going to say no.

Ion Storm has already had huge success with the genre-breaking *Deus Ex* and is looking forward to the challenges that *Thief III* will present. "The opportunity to create a game in the *Thief* universe is a real thrill," enthuses Warren Spector, studio director at Ion Storm. "*Thief* pioneered the concept of 'stealth action' gameplay on the PC and was the game that, more than any other, inspired me to build a team to create *Deus Ex*."

Like its predecessors, *Thief III* sees you stepping into the larcenous shoes of Garrett, who's unwittingly roused an ancient evil after trying to prevent the dreaded Dark Age from taking place. Not only is this instalment the first on the PC in three years, but it also marks the first time the franchise has appeared on a console.

Stealth has always played an important part in the series and *Thief III* is no exception; thieves' tools such as lock picks, flash bombs and wall-climbing gloves all feature strongly and sneaking around the grandiose museums, cathedrals and castles will eventually become second nature.

The visuals here are suitably sumptuous and feature some wonderful texturing along with an exceptional use of light (critical for hiding in the shadows). One interesting new development is 'Body Awareness' – this innovative feature shows Garrett's hands and feet and allows him to manipulate light and shadows in real-time. Havok's physics engine has also been signed up to ensure that interaction in *Thief III* is second to none. "Games like *Thief* are all about player experimentation in a deeply simulated world," explains Spector, "so a detailed physics simulation is absolutely critical if we are going to achieve our gameplay goals."

We're very excited about how *Thief III* will turn out. With the glut of FPSs that have been doing the rounds, it will be refreshing to do some good old-fashioned stealing for a change.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Eidos
DEVELOPER: Ion Storm
RELEASE: Q4 '03 (US: Q4 '03)
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Garrett's third outing is courtesy of Ion Storm and looks set to cement *Thief*'s reputation as the best first-person stealth game on the market today.

"THE SUPERB LIGHTING AND NEW PHYSICS ENGINE CREATE A VERY ATMOSPHERIC EXPERIENCE"



Thief III perfectly recreates the squalor of the past. Ah, great days…


eMag

FAR CRY

SANDY BEACHES, CLEAR SEAS AND A HIRED MILITIA THAT DOESN'T TAKE KINDLY TO TOURISTS…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC, Xbox
ORIGIN: Germany
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER: Crytek
RELEASE: PC: Nov '03, Xbox: TBA
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1- Multiplayer

■ Advanced AI mercenaries hunt down players in some of the most stunning locations ever created.

As the most hotly contested genre at this year's E3, most first-person shooter projects were drowned out amidst the hype surrounding *Halo 2*, *Half-Life 2* and *Deus Ex: Invisible War*. One game that did manage to hold its own against these giants was the spectacular *Far Cry*. Parading some of the most advanced 3D graphics ever achieved, Crytek has put the dazzling capabilities of its CryENGINE to a rather refreshing use. Unlike the majority of FPS titles where photo-realistic visuals have been channelled into depicting some post-apocalyptic hellhole, Crytek has used the technology to create a thing of real beauty. Staged around a tropical island paradise and featuring some of the most breathtaking scenery ever to grace a videogame, the spectacle is a 'far cry' (sorry) from the usual grim wastelands.

The project actually started life as a demo Crytek put together for NVIDIA to exhibit the capabilities of its GeForce 3 graphics card. So many eyebrows were raised by the awe-inspiring visuals that popular demand decreed this visual extravaganza simply had to be turned into a fully-fledged game. Ironically, the software that was originally created to promote GeForce technology is now one of the biggest reasons for gamers to invest in NVIDIA's latest hardware.

The dynamic lighting system helps to give the visuals their cutting edge, with individual materials and even the particles in smoke or steam having specific light maps. Polybump technology also uses intricate lighting to greatly amplify the apparent number of polygons. Textures enjoy equally advanced levels of detail and those most relevant to the largely outdoor settings are particularly stunning, with water that looks good enough to drink.

The staggering panoramic views that will really set the gaming world alight are made possible by the immense draw distance the CryENGINE is capable of rendering. Up to two kilometres of luscious tropical landscape can be clearly made out, with every inch being part of the active game environment and not merely a static backdrop. Each blade of grass and quivering leaf is part of a complex physics system that sports destructible terrain and enables convincing rag-doll deaths without the exaggerated limb bending.

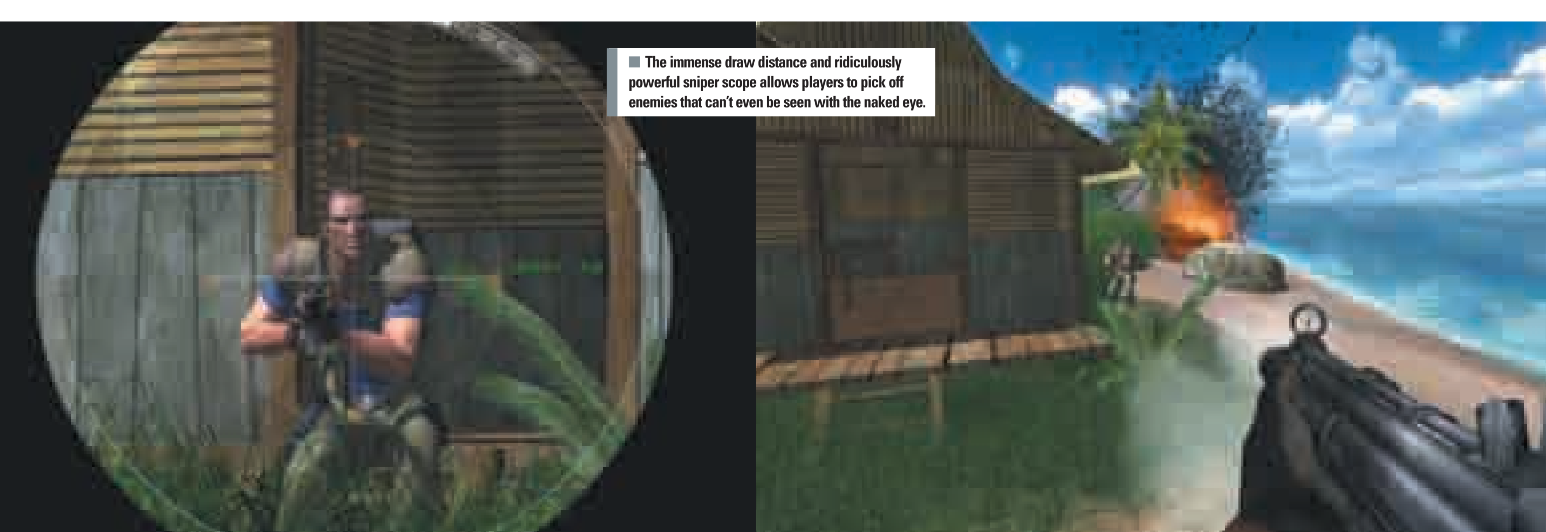
While we'd be happy lazily strolling along the beaches and taking in the sights, the heavy weaponry in our character's hands reminds us there's work to be done. Far from being just a pretty face, the CryENGINE has developed since its modelling days to ensure the gameplay in *Far Cry* does justice to the standard of its visuals. The army of mercenaries you'll find pursuing your character around the expanses of paradise, and through some nicely contrasting indoor sections, come equipped with some of the most sophisticated AI ever programmed.

Thankfully, players are granted impressive freedom of movement to try to outwit the enemy's unscripted ability to also use the entire map. From the scope we've seen this freedom lends to a scenario, the AI's constant goalpost moving appears to mock those who want to plan their route through a level. Combining such an impressive amount of brains with its exceptional beauty, *Far Cry* looks like the perfect partner for those cold winter evenings.

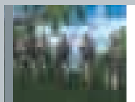
HUNTER BECOMES THE HUNTED

If you could pick anyone to be stranded on a desert island with, chances are a gang of bloodthirsty mercenaries wouldn't be first choice. And Ubi Soft promises even the most ardent FPS experts could be caught out by the outstanding intelligence of enemies who'll generally defy any behaviour patterns you'd bargained for. Totally unscripted and armed with the nearest thing to free will that has ever been achieved with AI, it won't be easy with these fellas hunting you down. Highly trained in co-ordinated squad tactics they'll use every trick in the book, from flanking your position to deploying decoys. Start running…

"FAR FROM BEING JUST A PRETTY FACE, THE GAMEPLAY MATCHES THE STANDARD OF THE VISUALS"



■ The immense draw distance and ridiculously powerful sniper scope allows players to pick off enemies that can't even be seen with the naked eye.



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Crytek was originally formed in 1999 and now boasts a team comprising 16 different nationalities. The German-based developer impressed the gaming world with its highly advanced CryENGINE technology, and *Far Cry* is the first game to utilise its revolutionary visual and gameplay capabilities.

HISTORY

■ *Far Cry* is the first title to be developed by Crytek.

■ Once a tool for illustrating the power of the GeForce graphics card, these achingly good visuals now come fully furnished with some equally ambitious gameplay.

■ It's refreshing to see photo-realistic graphics put to good use for a change, transporting players to a place of sublime natural beauty.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

CAST AWAY THE REST

HALO + HALF-LIFE x ROBINSON CRUSOE = FAR CRY

"BATTLES NEVER BECOME REPETITIVE WHEN YOU FACE FAR CRY'S UNPREDICTABLE AI, TRAINED IN ADVANCED ADAPTIVE GROUP TACTICS"

UBI SOFT PRESS RELEASE

FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL



■ The war-torn scenery isn't reserved for outside – even interiors could do with a lick of paint.

"YOU MEAN I GET TO HIT A RADSCORPION WITH A SUPER SLEDGEHAMMER, HEAR THE CRACK OF ITS SHELL AND SEE THE GUTS GO FLYING? IN REAL TIME? I'M IN"
CHUCK CUEVAS, PRODUCER

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

FALLOUT UNDERGOES SEVERE MUTATION

FALLOUT TACTICS x BALDUR'S GATE: DA - HUNTER: THE RECKONING = FALLOUT: BOS

■ While fuel may be a commodity, the sick pleasure of watching foes writhe in agony is worth the usage.



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Interplay is one of the oldest software companies still producing high-quality games twenty years after its foundation in 1983. It has supported many, if not most, hardware formats in that time and between its several divisions has developed some truly genre-defining titles such as the acclaimed *Baldur's Gate* series.

HISTORY

- **MESSIAH** 2000 [PC]
- **DESCENT** 1996 [PSone]
- **BATTLE CHESS** 1988 [Amiga]

ANOTHER CULT SERIES, ANOTHER MAKE-OR-BREAK CONSOLE DEBUT

Depending on who you ask, the term 'RPG' can mean very different things. Console gamers are used to story-led, character-heavy epics while PC players tend to see the genre as a more open-ended and free-roaming affair. The odd crossover is inevitable, if a little out of place – games like *Morrowind* on Xbox and the *Final Fantasy* PC titles received less than ecstatic receptions. The popular post-apocalyptic RPG series *Fallout* has served up some archetypal PC role play, but when it comes to translating the series to appeal to a console audience, get ready for a change of direction. As a console RPG, the lack of spiky hair and cute talking creatures would most likely confuse or annoy the Squaresoft generation, so what's the answer? Make it into an action game, of course…

First off, forget *Hunter The Reckoning* ever happened. Conceptually excellent yet horribly flawed, the four player bore-'em-up bears more than a few similarities to *Brotherhood Of Steel* but even at this early stage, the latter already feels far superior. Thanks to a targeting system and a much more extensive array of death-dealing machinery, combat is far more intuitive than in last year's *Gauntlet* wannabe. Throw into the mix a greatly augmented version of the *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* engine (no slouch visually) and you've got the makings of a solid gaming experience.

While RPG elements have been streamlined, character evolution still plays a very important role in your progress. Unfortunately, creation options have gone, being replaced with an initial cast of three basic characters, though these are all sufficiently different and customisable enough to make them your own as the game goes on. There'll also be plenty of levelling up and stat distribution – although it may seem a little limited in theory, Interplay has stressed the need for a fixed set of characters in an action game.

What's perhaps most impressive at the moment is the integration of the *Fallout* universe into a totally new experience. From the heavy emphasis on action to the two-player co-operative play that's set to become one of the highlights of the game, *Brotherhood Of Steel* manages to combine traditional action elements with the core ingredients that have made the series a cult success. Already the backlash has begun, though – the game isn't even finished but people are panning it on principle. This is to be pretty much expected with a series with such a following – imagine the uproar if the next *Final Fantasy* title turned out to be a lightgun shooter…

It's with a tear in our eye that we watch the free-roaming RPG elements slip away from *Fallout*, but it would be fully fledged hysteria if we thought they were gone for good. Thankfully, we have faith in Interplay and while it has yet to be officially announced, we're confident that the next PC *Fallout* will be a return to explorative and stat-heavy glory. In the meantime, we're happy to embrace what it's becoming. Like the recent update of *Shinobi*, and *Prince Of Persia*'s new look, the heritage is apparent even if the game itself is a departure from what the familiar title may imply. Yes, it's a bit different. No, it's not *Fallout 3*. But whatever the name on the box, this could be quite the sleeper surprise when it launches later this this year.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PS2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Vivendi
DEVELOPER: Interplay
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: Action
PLAYERS: 1-2

■ The popular post-apocalyptic PC RPG series gets the arcade treatment for its first appearance on… well, anything that isn't a PC.

WAIT YOUR TURN

Fans of the original *Fallout* and its excellent sequel will be used to the turn-based nature of the combat system, but all this is being changed. The last title, *Fallout Tactics*, featured an option to play in real-time – indeed, it was the default setting but was ignored by many in favour of the slower, more familiar system. Now that option doesn't exist and since *Brotherhood Of Steel* is a pure action game it's real-time fighting all the way. Of course, you'll need to be much more alert to stay alive – browsing menus and robbing graves in the heat of battle is a definite no-no and having to reload or patch yourself up at a critical point could be fatal.

> "PERHAPS MOST IMPRESSIVE IS THE INTEGRATION OF THE FALLOUT UNIVERSE INTO A TOTALLY NEW EXPERIENCE"



■ The camera moves a lot to give you the best view of the action, but the targeting system also lets you reposition it at will.



AMPED 2

LOOK, JUST MAKE YOUR OWN PUN ABOUT IT BEING 'COOL', OKAY?

The extreme sports genre may be a crowded one but nobody can accuse it of being boring. From the larger than life free-for-alls like *Tony Hawk's* and *SSX* to near-simulations like Microsoft's own *Amped*, pretty much all aspects of the genre are covered by one title or another. It's amazing that the more realistic games retain their popularity in the wake of these over-the-top affairs; once you've done a grind along a telephone wire or launched into a triple backflip from a 20-foot ramp, anything less can seem a little underwhelming. It's the attention to detail that keeps gamers from getting bored of realism, though, and as the sequel to one of the most impressive snowboarding titles we've seen to date, *Amped 2* has that in spades.

Rather than drop you into the shoes of a seasoned pro and expect the world of you, *Amped* follows in the footsteps of its predecessor and focuses on your unknown boarder and their rise to glory. As you improve, more sponsors and pros will take notice until you're eventually the undisputed king of the piste. This is far more in-depth than it was first time around while still retaining the excellent structure. Another thing that is still present (although it's perhaps not quite so major) is the difficulty level. Anyone who played the first game will know that it was anything but simple. Although we've yet to really put the hours into this snowy sequel, we're assured that the game will offer players of all abilities a good challenge – *Amped*'s learning curve was arguably a little steep.

If anybody knows what Xbox Live is capable of, it's Microsoft, and the online features that will be offered by *Amped 2* prove just that. The online play will form the fundamental part of the networked experience, allowing up to eight players to compete in single or team events that range from simple trick runs to modes like HORSE (beat the previous player's score or get a letter towards a word – finish the word and you're out).

As is so often the case now, players' stats will be logged and charted in global and localised rankings for quick reference, and in further use of online integration replay trades and content downloads are already planned. We're not talking the odd board or jacket here and there either; Microsoft has already stated that extras will range from the little elements like garments through music tracks and equipment all the way up to new mountains to conquer. The best use of Live proposed so far? It's certainly up there.

With Mr Hawk's online shenanigans being confined to the PlayStation2, *Amped 2* looks set to be the first extreme sports game to offer network support. If this isn't enough to distinguish it from its predecessor for you, the many enhancements to the trick system (more versatility thanks to a greater number of overall moves and the ability to link them more freely with manuals), a deeper and more involving Career mode and a wider variety of locations and runs should place it streets ahead. While your average punter may get more enjoyment from the neon excitement of *SSX*, there's something to be said for the more down to earth approach whereby even landing a simple grab or jib results in a feeling of accomplishment that no 1080º Tweaked Stalefish Frontflip can ever rival.

It might be just another snowboarding game, but from what we've seen so far it's also one of the best extreme sports games we've seen in a long time.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: Sports
PLAYERS: 1-8

Microsoft is pulling out all the stops to make this sequel to one of last year's most underrated sports games a real improvement.

RHYTHM IS A DANCER

One of the best aspects of the original game was its excellent soundtrack and music options, featuring over 200 diverse indie tracks on the game disc as well as offering the use of hard drive soundtracks. Beat freaks will no doubt be delighted to hear that not only will the same customisation options be present second time around but the default playlist has also grown in size, serving up over 300 helpings of sonic joy in all shapes and sizes. The tunes may not have the big name impact of those elsewhere in sporting extremity but that doesn't mean to say the quality is any lower – if nothing else, the sheer number of tracks will mean there are bound to be a few that please the eardrum.

"THE BEST USE OF LIVE PROPOSED SO FAR? QUITE POSSIBLY…"



She wants to be careful on all that slippery snow. Oh, wait, that's the idea. Silly us.



COMPANY PROFILE

■ As a division of one of the largest software companies in the world, Microsoft Game Studios tends to publish more software than it develops. With the rise of the Xbox, though, this is starting to change and we're seeing a much greater number of first-party titles from the house that Bill built.

HISTORY

- **CRIMSON SKIES** 2003 [Xbox]
- **NFL FEVER** 2003 [Xbox]
- **AMPED** 2002 [Xbox]

■ Don't come crying to us when that board snaps clean in two…

■ Plants are a new addition to the trick book, making for even better combo potential.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

JIBBING AHEAD OF THE PACK

THPS4 + SSX + REALISM = AMPED 2

■ The detail is as impressive as we hoped but will you stay on-piste or go exploring?

"GAMERS CAN EXPLORE VAST AREAS OF WIDE-OPEN, SPECTACULARLY RENDERED MOUNTAINS PACKED WITH TERRAIN PARKS"

MICROSOFT PRESS RELEASE

FREEDOM FIGHTERS



Missions are interconnected, meaning players who take out a harmlessly docked chopper early in the game will avoid meeting it in battle later on.

TO BEAT THE REDS, YOU'LL NEED A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PS2, PC
ORIGIN: Denmark
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: IO Interactive
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-4

Control up to 12 comrades on the battle-scarred streets of New York.

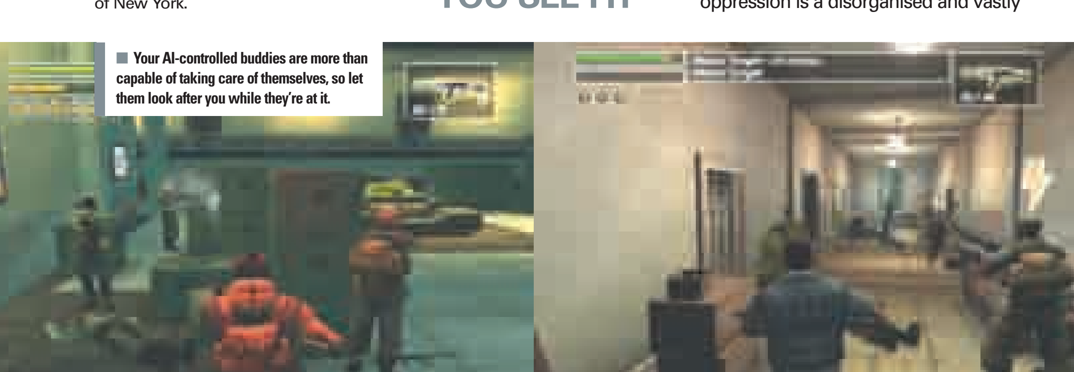
"ENVIRONMENTS ARE FILLED WITH OPPORTUNITIES YOU CAN CHOOSE TO EXPLOIT HOWEVER YOU SEE FIT"

Ever since we first sampled this squad-based follow-up to IO Interactive's *Hitman* series, we've been hungry for more. So a dose of Xbox preview code with its fast-paced urban warfare really hit the spot. *Freedom*'s action takes place on the war-torn streets of New York in a future where Russia has emerged as the dominant world superpower, casting its Iron Curtain over much of the globe. All that stands in the way of America becoming the latest victim of Soviet oppression is a disorganised and vastly outnumbered bunch of freedom fighters. Enter Christopher Stone, a particularly patriotic New York plumber willing to risk it all to boot the Red Army off US soil.

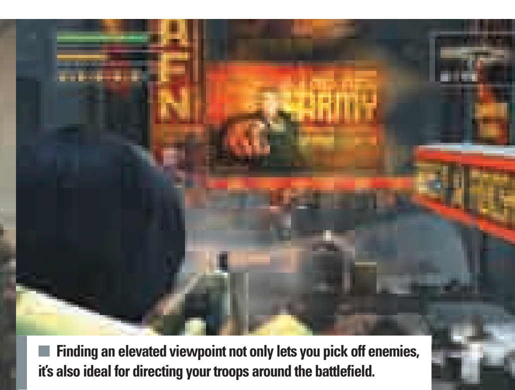
Playing as Chris, it's your job to recruit like-minded citizens to recapture a series of strategic installations from Soviet control. Persuading your fellow Americans to place their lives in your hands is going to take a charismatic leader, and only by your actions will you earn the respect that will attract a greater following. Up to 12 team members can fall under your command and although skilful use of their services is key to making it through the legions of Russian aggressors, a user-friendly control interface ensures the action need never slow down.

While only three generic commands govern the actions of your team and keep all gameplay to the touch of a single button, they never dilute control of your squad. Some incredibly promising team AI lies at the heart of the game dynamics and means simply pointing your recruits in the intended direction with orders to either attack, defend a position or follow your lead is enough to achieve the outcome you want. Leave the rest up to them and your faith will be rewarded.

There's plenty of non-linearity to the level design, providing an environment filled with opportunities you can exploit in any way you see fit. Controlling an entire squad allows for even more possibilities as you can take advantage of those elevated viewpoints whilst also mounting a direct attack with your troops on the ground. Frankly the more we see of *Freedom Fighters*, the more mouth-watering a prospect it becomes…



Your AI-controlled buddies are more than capable of taking care of themselves, so let them look after you while they're at it.



Finding an elevated viewpoint not only lets you pick off enemies, it's also ideal for directing your troops around the battlefield.


eMag

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04



"WE OWE THE SERIES' FANS HUGE THANKS FOR KEEPING MCRAE THE DOMINANT FORCE IN THE GENRE, AND WE INTEND TO REINFORCE THAT POSITION WITH THE NEW GAME"

RICHARD DARLING, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, CODEMASTERS

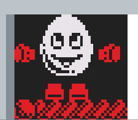
■ The Impreza is still synonymous with the game – racing with any other vehicle doesn't seem right.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

MAKING A RALLY GREAT GAME...

COLIN MCRAE - THE WORLD x FRIENDS = COLIN MCRAE 04

■ Snow will still offer the ultimate rally challenge – damaging your car will be all too easy.



COMPANY PROFILE

Historically, Codemasters has been one of the most prolific and respected of all the UK developers. Having impressed in the 8-bit days with *Dizzy*, the Codies have since gone on to develop such high-calibre games as *Operation Flashpoint*, *Toca* and the *Colin McRae* rally games.

HISTORY

- **DIZZY – THE ULTIMATE CARTOON ADVENTURE** 1987 [Multi]
- **MICRO MACHINES** 1991 [Mega Drive]
- **COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0** 2000 [PSone, PC]

SECOND NEXT-GEN OUTING FOR THE CELEBRATED RALLY SERIES

When *Colin McRae* was first released on the PSone, few games at the time could hope to match what was on offer. Though many rally titles followed none managed to come close to the seemingly realistic handling and lush graphics that have become trademarks of the series. Times change though, and if the original *Colin McRae Rally* was the rallying yin to *Gran Turismo*'s yang, its next-generation iteration was unfairly perceived as a game that offered little more than gloss without really delivering anything new in terms of gameplay and next-gen spin. Though *Colin McRae 3* delivered a superlative rallying experience, those familiar with the series couldn't help but bemoan the lack of original features to set it apart from the other rallying franchises, many of which now boast title-threatening official track licences and similarly convincing handling.

It would appear that, like Colin McRae's current rally season, the series faces an uphill struggle if it is to attain the kind of success it deserves. However, Codemasters has clearly realised the need for an evolution of the series and *Colin McRae 04* is already looking very promising indeed. Amid all the expected fripperies and tweaks there will be some genuinely new additions to the game that should set it apart from its peers.

Emphasis this time has been placed upon giving the player more control of the rallying experience. Instead of being limited to entering the championships as the Flying Scot himself, players will be able to choose any car or team to race the eight world stages, and considering Colin McRae now drives the slightly less than desirable Citroen Saxo, it's probably for the best – especially as racing in anything other than the Subaru Impreza still doesn't feel like you're playing a proper *Colin McRae* game.

This minor but important tweak is only the start of what looks to be an important stage in the development of the series. Elsewhere, players will now be able to test specific parts of the car – be it tyres, suspension or the engine – throughout the season. Drivers will have to earn new parts in Test Challenges that are set around the world. Completing these will mean that vital new components will become available for use during races and acquiring these will be crucial in your quest to become a Rally Champion.

Also tantalising is the promised four-player split-screen action that's coming exclusively to the Xbox, presumably because the PS2 can only manage a two-player split-screen mode (along with a higher polygon count, it's already looking like the Xbox version could be the one to watch). No matter what your preferred format, Codemasters has added more than enough multiplayer options to keep everyone happy. Our favourite has to be the Co-operative mode, where you and a friend race as one team either in split-screen or taking it in turns to try to ensure that your team is the dominant force in rallying. Again, it's not a massive departure but a welcome addition and, along with the other little changes, should ensure that the series remains the choice for fans of the genre.

After a competent but disappointing first next-gen outing, *Colin McRae 04* is already shaping up to be the rally game that fans of this series hoped for the first time around.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PS2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Codemasters
DEVELOPER: In-house
RELEASE: Q4 '03
GENRE: Driving
PLAYERS: 1-4

Another addition to the *McRae* dynasty – it still lacks the official licence and Colin's in a Saxo but this time it seems the Codies mean business.

SLIPPERY BUGGERS

***Colin McRae 04* will let players slide around eight countries in a choice of 20 cars. Naturally, you'll have the chance to race all the current 2WD and 4WD rally cars that have been lovingly re-created. So far, Codemasters has confirmed that the Citroen Xsara, Ford Puma, Fiat Punto and, of course, the Subaru Impreza will be available to damage at will. There'll also be plenty of unlockable classic cars to throw around the hairpins. Unfortunately, the tracks that will feature in the games are inspired by, rather than actual re-creations of, real rally stages. Thankfully, the series' strength remains the physics engine and that's what really matters to gamers.**

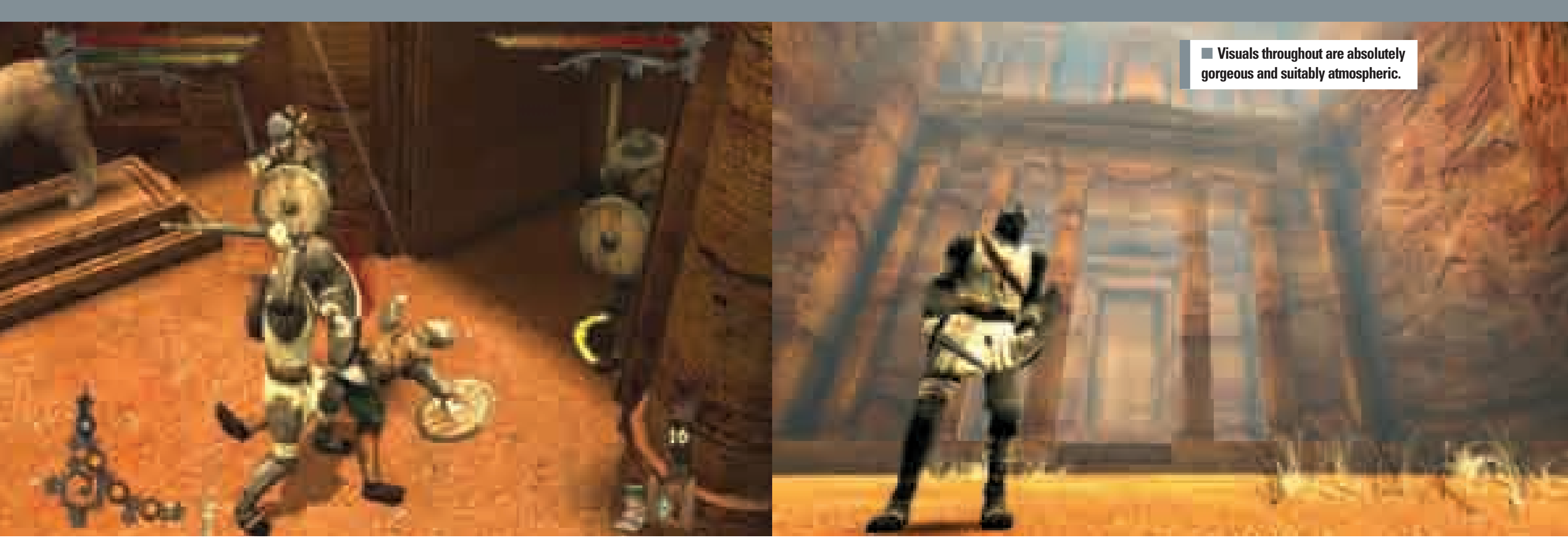
"EMPHASIS THIS TIME HAS BEEN PLACED UPON THE GIVING THE PLAYER MORE CONTROL OF THE RALLYING EXPERIENCE"



Current rally cars will be on offer at first, but classic vehicles will become unlocked as you progress.

Colin McRae Rally 04 is already impressing with its stunning visuals.

TEMPLAR: KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE



Visuals throughout are absolutely gorgeous and suitably atmospheric.

MAIMING, BIG SWORDS AND PLENTY OF BLOOD – WHO SAYS HISTORY ISN'T FUN?

DETAILS
FORMAT: Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: Sweden
PUBLISHER: TDK Mediactive
DEVELOPER: Starbreeze
RELEASE: December '03
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Templar places you in the role of a Knight of the Temple and sees you iterally getting medieval against the backdrop of the Crusades.

Okay, we admit it – history wasn't one of our strong subjects at school. We never saw the point in writing essays about people who'd been dead for hundreds of years, or analysing the repeal of the Corn Laws. Fortunately, however, Starbreeze did pay attention and, as a result, *Templar: Knights Of The Temple* is already benefiting from its historical slant.

Taking on the role of Paul de Raque, you set out on a holy crusade to join your order, the Knights of the Temple, in the Holy Land. What follows is a third-person adventure that sees your knight handling a variety of weapons and defeating a menagerie of foes over 20 action-packed levels; all the way making sure you don't fall unconscious and enter the dreaded Nightmare Land.

"Our CMO, Nicklas Dunham, first pitched the idea of *Templar* after reading a book called *Road To Jerusalem* by Jan Gillou," explains Fredrik Jansson, lead programmer for *Templar*. "It's about a young guy growing up in Sweden who takes off to the Crusades and joins the order of the Knights of the Temple after having sex before marriage, a deed very much frowned upon in those days."

Having already had success on the Xbox with its graphically impressive (but rather flawed) *Enclave*, Starbreeze decided to take its original engine and enhance it. "We've implemented a much better camera this time around and improved a lot of the effects," Jansson says. "All the gameplay elements have been fixed and the game also runs much more smoothly – in all, the *Enclave* engine has received a facelift."

Even in these early stages of development, *Templar* is already looking striking and is starting to surpass the gothic beauty of *Enclave*. Much of the architecture and level design is based upon ancient cities such as Jerusalem and fully captures the splendour of the historical period. Visuals throughout are of a very high standard with crumbling walls, crumpled clothing and intricate statues all featuring incredible amounts of texturing.

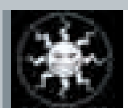
Templar's animation is courtesy of Starbreeze's recently built motion capture studio and features some wonderfully fluid characters with particular attention being paid to Paul de Raque. Once you drift into the Nightmare Land, however, the visuals are really cranked up to 11. Starbreeze has created a disturbing, organic-looking landscape that wouldn't feel out of place within the pages of a Clive Barker novel.

One of the biggest problems with *Enclave* was that the combat was a little primitive – the melee system used was a sorry affair that quickly degenerated into overly simplistic hack and slash action. This time around, Starbreeze is implementing several improvements. A quick press of the right analogue stick will see your character launch into a series of attacks in that direction and you can now lock-on to enemies and strafe around them. Divine powers will also feature in the game and allow you to call upon four different spells to aid yourself and defeat enemies. In fact, the only disappointing feature is the now *de rigueur* bullet-time (although it may not make the final cut). While it's pretty effective when pulling off a death move, its over-use in normal combat makes the gameplay seem laboured. Considering there's a good six months before it's released, we're already looking forward to getting our hands on review code. Let's just hope Starbreeze keeps taking those history lessons…

DÉJÀ VU

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and bits of *Templar*, most obviously the Nightmare Land sections, share similarities with several other games. Anyone who's played the *Shadow Man* or *Legacy Of Kain* games will find the underworld sections familiar: get knocked unconscious and you'll be sent to a fiery demon-filled hell. *Templar*'s other, er, tribute is allowing the player to begin the game as a fully-fledged knight who engages his students in combat. Your knight has a full range of special moves and weapons, which gives you a taste of what's to come (just like in *Metroid Prime*). You'll then go on to play as the lone student who's not defeated.

"THIS TAKES THE OUTSTANDING VISUALS OF ENCLAVE AND ADDS A GOOD DOLLOP OF GAMEPLAY"



COMPANY PROFILE

Starbreeze is based in Uppsala, Sweden and originally merged with O3 Games in 2001 as its games development and R&D department. The newly formed company was renamed in 2002 and released *Enclave*, a beautiful-looking third-person adventure for the PC and Xbox.

HISTORY

- **ENCLAVE** 2002 [Xbox, PC]
- **THE OUTFORCE** 2001 [PC]

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

WHEN KNIGHTS WERE MOTION CAPTURED

ENCLAVE + THE CRUSADES x DEMONS = TEMPLAR

"THE COMBINATION OF THE MEDIEVAL SETTING AND THE BRUTAL FIGHTING MAKES THIS A UNIQUE AND THRILLING EXPERIENCE"

NICKLAS DUNHAM, SENIOR VP MARKETING AND SALES, STARBREEZE

The combat is already a massive improvement over *Enclave*.

Templar's Nightmare Land has a brutal selection of foes, all thirsting for your blood.

GIFTPIA



■ The clock in the corner shows how much time you've got left – run out and you'll be in trouble.

■ Some areas of the island are blocked off to begin with, but open up as you complete certain tasks.

"WE WANTED TO MAKE A GAME THAT COMMUNICATES TO THE PLAYER AND MAKES THEM THINK ABOUT WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO BE AN ADULT"

KENICHI NISHI, DIRECTOR, SKIP LTD

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

LOOKING A GIFTPIA IN THE MOUTH

ANIMAL CROSSING - BOREDOM x JAPANESE MADNESS = GIFTPIA



COMPANY PROFILE

■ Based in the heart of the Tokyo's Shibuya district, Skip Ltd may not be the most renowned of developers but it has great talent hidden within it. Comprising several key ex-Square members (including Kenichi Nishi of *Chrono Trigger* fame), the firm is currently working on a number of unique games.

HISTORY

■ **CHIBIROBO** 2003 [PS2]
■ **GIFTPIA** 2003 [GameCube]

SELL CRAZY SOMEPLACE ELSE – WE'RE ALL STOCKED UP HERE

At games™, we like to think that because we've been playing RPGs for so darn long, we're completely *au fait* with how most of them work. As such, we never seem to have any problems plugging through even the most text-heavy Japanese adventure, despite the fact our knowledge of the language amounts to the words for 'save', 'load' and 'quit'. However, that was until the Japanese version of *GiFTPiA* landed on our desks. We've spent ages attempting to explore its depths with a combination of logic, experimentation and a Japanese dictionary but we've drawn a bit of a blank; probably because for a game that bases itself on real-life principles, it's utterly bizarre.

Set on the tropical paradise of Nanashi Island, you control Pockle – a lad on the cusp of becoming a man. However, Pockle's a bit of a delinquent and spends much of his time in bed; so much time, in fact, that he oversleeps and misses his own coming-of-age ceremony. Sounds harmless, but missing the ceremony is a big no-no and you're thrown in jail. Luckily, you're dating the mayor's daughter and she manages to get you out – but in return for your freedom it's up to you to raise enough cash for another ceremony (a piffling 500,000 gold coins) so that everyone can consider you a man. So far, so weird… and that's where the game begins.

Given that *GiFTPiA* features lots of cutesy graphics (all wrapped up in cel-shading, no less), plenty of do-gooding and an ultimate goal of collecting as much cash as possible, you'd be forgiven for thinking that it's just another *Animal Crossing*. To be fair, *GiFTPiA* does feature certain aspects of Nintendo's addictive communication title but ultimately manages to go much further than *Animal Crossing*'s 'take this here, do this there' gameplay. For starters, being a minor means that you've got a curfew, so you can only be out for certain hours of the day. Stay out too long and you'll be caught by the dreaded Sleep Ghosts (no, really), causing you to pass out and have all your useful items stolen. As you progress, your curfew will be extended.

There's also another way of completing the game that totally avoids the need for collecting cash, discovered once you've found a way of meeting what appears to be some kind of mystical mushroom-induced god (drugs? In a videogame? Never). Thanks to this decidedly trippy sub-plot –and numerous subtle references that pop up from time to time – *GiFTPiA* maintains a suitably mature atmosphere that'll keep gamers interested, despite the childish appearance.

Preconceptions aside, it's difficult not to be even a tiny bit intrigued by what *GiFTPiA* is attempting to do with the RPG genre. The only questions that remain right now concern the game's longevity (Nintendo's US press site says there are 'dozens' of things to do, which doesn't sound like a lot to us) and whether Nintendo will be able to pull off a translation that manages to capture the unique tongue-in-cheek style the game already appears to possess. After all, it's likely that *GiFTPiA* will be largely ignored by most Western gamers, and if the charm is lost, not even the fans will have a reason to buy it…

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Skip Ltd
RELEASE: TBA (Japan: Out Now, US: Q4 '03)
GENRE: RPG
PLAYERS: 1

■ The trend for RPGs that are like real life (only not) continues with the 'next big thing' for the Cube. But will such Japanese craziness work in the West?

HEALTH AND EFFICIENCY

It's not just the clock that you're up against in *GiFTPiA* – there's also your own well-being. In true RPG style, you have an energy bar in the form of hearts that float in the corner of the screen, but you won't find any enemies or weapons that can hurt you. Instead, you're up against fatigue. As you perform tasks, carry items or just move around, you'll notice that your health slowly diminishes. To combat this, you can pick up and eat fruit to top up your energy, meaning any long trips should be done with plenty of food in your bag. However, fruit that's held for too long will go bad and make you ill if you eat it, so keep tabs on those 'best before' dates…

"WITH TWO TOTALLY DIFFERENT ENDINGS PROMISED DEPENDING ON HOW YOU APPROACH IT, GIFTPIA LOOKS TO BE A GAME THAT DEMANDS REPEATED PLAY"

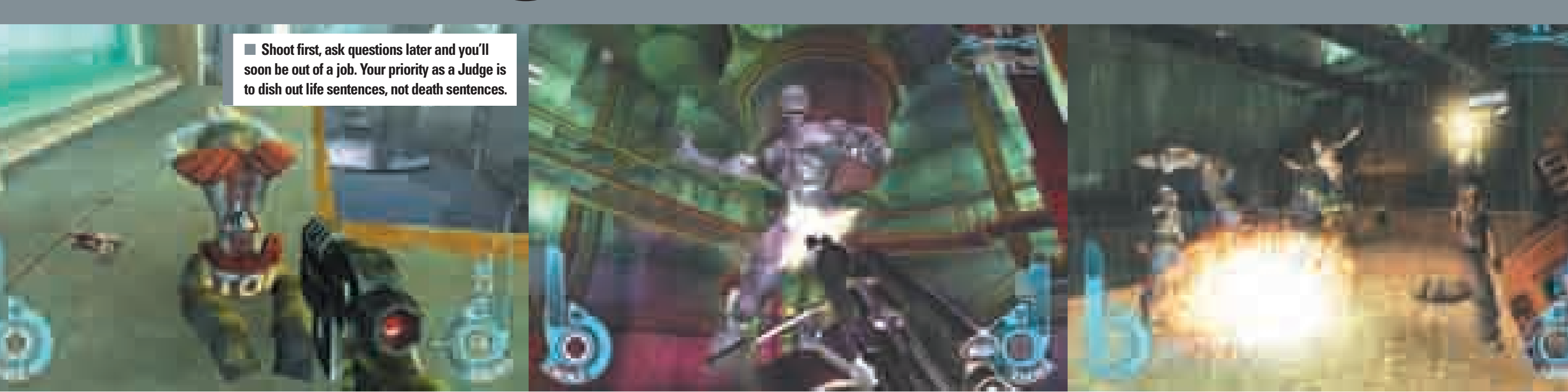


■ Picking fruit is important, as you'll need it to keep hunger at bay. And we thought only Shreddies did that.



■ That Police Robot follows you everywhere at the start, just to keep you in check.

JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS. DEATH



Shoot first, ask questions later and you'll soon be out of a job. Your priority as a Judge is to dish out life sentences, not death sentences.

DREDD RISES FROM THE COMIC BOOK PAGES AGAIN TO TAKE ON AN OLD ADVERSARY

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC, PS2, Xbox, GC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal
DEVELOPER: Rebellion
RELEASE: September '03
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-2 (PC: Multiplayer Online)

An artistic shooter that captures the violence and humour of the Judge's quest to uphold the law.

Ever since his public humiliation at the hands of Hollywood in a lame big-screen outing, Judge Dredd has spent the last few years rebuilding his gritty reputation on the pages of *2000AD*. Yet despite that famously botched attempt to do justice to the Judge outside his comic-book home, the potential for the Dredd universe to host an enticing gaming experience has thrust the fearsome law enforcer into the limelight again. And with *2000AD* publisher Rebellion handling the development duties, fans can expect a faithful rendition of Dredd's adventures on the mean streets of Mega-City One.

"MEGA-CITY ONE IS BROUGHT TO LIFE, CAPTURING THE ESSENCE OF THE DREDD UNIVERSE"

Players step into the sturdy boots of Dredd himself in order to impose his unique brand of justice on the city's felons. Granted the power to apprehend, try and sentence lawbreakers on the spot, Dredd must respect the law at all times and respond appropriately to the severity of crimes. Shooting a graffiti artist in cold blood is generally frowned upon by your superiors, and will gradually deplete your Law Meter. Abuse your power enough to reduce this to zero and Dredd will quickly find himself on the receiving end of the justice system. Thankfully, you are given a bit of leeway, allowing for the odd lapse of professionalism if a perp gets lippy.

Abiding by the rules can be a pain at times, as a Judge is required to verbally challenge suspects and refrain from violence until fired upon. Even in combat, minimum force should always be used and shooting the weapon from a criminal's hands causes them to surrender while they still have a pulse. Gradually this becomes less relevant as hardened crims are never likely to co-operate, until the story eventually takes Dredd beneath the city's surface to use extreme prejudice against an army of lawless zombies.

A great deal of effort has been made to capture the scale and atmosphere of Mega-City One, with the sophisticated Asura engine being specially developed to bring the comic to life. Watch in horror as incinerated corpses are burned down to the skeleton, then raise a smile at a spoof Pot Noodle ad. The unique style Rebellion has given the game should attract *2000AD* fans and provide other FPS aficionados with a visual treat.



You'd be a fool to expect the undead to come quietly, and once you're up against Judge Death's cronies the game becomes a standard shoot-'em-up affair.

Gangs of hoodlums have inter-linked morale levels, so taking out the strongest member in style will usually make the others give themselves up..


eMag

SHOWCASE

MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

SAME GAME, DIFFERENT GRAPHICS

Format:	GameCube
Origin:	Japan
Publisher:	Konami
Developer:	Silicon Knights
Release:	November '03
Genre:	Adventure
Players:	1



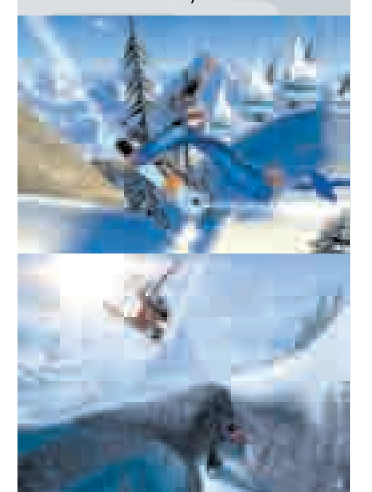
So, the first GameCube instalment of *Metal Gear Solid* is just a graphically improved conversion of the PSone original. Disappointed? Perhaps. While we're certainly miffed that a new title isn't in the works, the fact that the original is a proven classic at least gives us some hope that it won't be as lacklustre as *Sons Of Liberty*. Our only concerns right now are with the GameCube pad – having tried to play the game with it at E3, we've got some serious doubts as to how well it will work. Still, with both Kojima-san and Miyamoto-san at the helm, Snake's first GameCube appearance is guaranteed to sell regardless of any quibbles we may have.

SSX 3

LESS TRICKY, MORE FREEDOM

Format:	PS2/Xbox/GameCube
Origin:	US
Publisher:	EA Sports BIG
Developer:	EA Canada
Release:	Q3 '03
Genre:	Sports
Players:	1-2

EA's preference for sequels over innovation is a pet hate for some gamers, but when it comes to EA's Sports BIG games like the *SSX* series, we're not complaining. Surprisingly for an arcade-styled Sports BIG game, *SSX 3* seems to take a more realistic approach to snowboarding than the previous games. While the huge range of tricks and over-the-top boarding action is still present, there's much more of a *Tony Hawk* feel about the game than there once was. Customisable characters, over a hundred challenges and a fully licensed soundtrack are just some of the improvements. So it looks as if EA is looking to move in on Activision's territory.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

SO REAL, IT'S UNREAL

Format:	PC
Origin:	US
Publisher:	Atari
Developer:	Digital Extremes
Release:	Q3 '03
Genre:	Shoot-'em-up
Players:	TBC



Ever seen something that was really good and wished you'd thought of it? Obviously, the people at Digital Extremes have – that's why they've pinched all the decent ideas from games like *Tribes 2* and *Halo*, then slapped them straight into *Unreal Tournament 2004*. From the vehicles like jeeps and skimmers, character models that look like Master Chief, various assault scenarios and familiar-styled weapons, it's a bit too similar to be a coincidence. Still, since *Halo* used all the best ideas from other FPSs, it's only fair that this title does the same. Having enjoyed the previous *Unreal Tournament* games, we hope all these new additions don't spoil the gameplay.

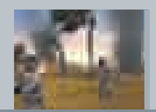
BUFFY: CHAOS BLEEDS

SHE'S BUFF AND SHE'S THE STUFF, YEAH

Format:	PS2/Xbox/GameCube
Origin:	US
Publisher:	Vivendi Universal
Developer:	Eurocom
Release:	Q3 '03
Genre:	Beat-'em-up
Players:	1

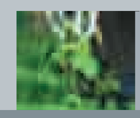
Buffy's TV show might be dead and buried, but her spirit lives on in the videogame world, mainly thanks to the fact that the last game did reasonably well and Vivendi has realised that it's onto a winner. Despite having a different developer, *Chaos Bleeds* is pretty much business as usual for Ms Summers; explore the expansive 3D environments, solve puzzles and beat the living-dead daylights out of any demons that get in your way. With the addition of five new characters to play as alongside Buffy, including Spike, Xander and the lovely Willow, and a deep storyline like the show itself, it certainly could prove to be a game to get your teeth into…





DELAYED – STAR WARS GALAXIES (MULTI)

■ **Recognising that this is one game that needs to be pulled off with perfection, LucasArts has placed the console versions of *Star Wars Galaxies* on indefinite hold until the PC version is finished.**



CANNED – MALICE (MULTI)

■ **We hate to say we told you so but, well, we told you so. With Vivendi attempting to streamline its portfolio, Argonaut's *Malice* has been canned completely. Not that it matters, of course.**

SNIPER ELITE

WHITES OF THEIR EYES AND ALL THAT

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube
Origin: UK
Publisher: Wanadoo
Developer: Rebellion
Release: Q1 '04
Genre: Shoot-'em-up
Players: 1-2 (Online TBC)



Most FPS games these days offer the player a wide variety of weapons with which to carve a path of destruction, each more powerful than the last. But what if you were stuck with just one? Such is the premise of *Sniper Elite*, a game giving you the task of taking out enemies using your unique stealth and sharp-shooting skills. While other weapons will be available, their use will be limited due to your specialist abilities – total success will depend on players using their sniping talents to the fullest. Having played it, we can say it's shaping up to be something pretty special, even if we do have to wait until next year to get the finished article.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

IT'S THE EYE OF THE TIGER

Format: PS2/Xbox/GC/PC/GBA
Origin: US
Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Redwood Shores
Release: October '03
Genre: Sports
Players: 1-4

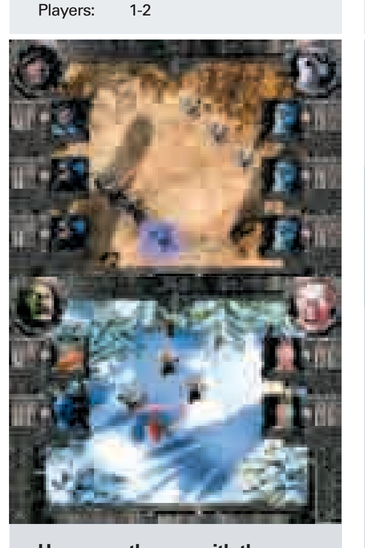
Despite calling itself 'the most comprehensive and competitive golf game available', it's fair to say that EA's latest Tiger Woods title looks remarkably like the last one. Of course, it's the little things behind the scenes that matter with a sports game like this; rather than changing the basics (which were good enough to begin with), everything else has been enhanced instead. With seven new courses, a clutch of added play modes, more PGA Tour pros, an enhanced Season mode, a new World Tour mode and even online play for the PS2 version, it's certainly got everything you'd want from a top golf sim. But will it be worth the upgrade?



EMPIRE OF MAGIC

OH, OH, OH – IT'S MAGIC

Format: PC
Origin: Slovak Republic
Publisher: Nobilis
Developer: Mayhem Studios
Release: August '03
Genre: RPG
Players: 1-2



Hey, you – the guy with the handful of twenty-sided dice. Like your turn-based RPGs, do you? Then Nobilis has got something that'll be right up your PC gaming alley. Declaring it to be the best thing since the last helping of *Heroes Of Might And Magic*, *Empire Of Magic* is intended to not only please the fans, but also open up the genre to a wider audience. Yes, it's got a suitably complex storyline full of people with names like Artemian, loads of quests, characters, weapons and spells, plus all the things that make this kind of game great. But can it really make such a niche genre appeal to non-fans? To be honest, we're not so sure…

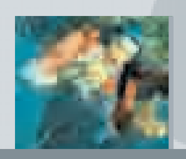
LINE OF SIGHT: VIETNAM

IN THE JUNGLE, THE MIGHTY JUNGLE

Format: PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Atari
Developer: n-Fusion
Release: 1 August
Genre: Shoot-'em-up
Players: 1 (Online TBC)

A game that places you in the role of a crack sniper, intent on eliminating the enemy without being seen – sound familiar? It should do, especially if you've just read about *Sniper Elite* (over on the left. See it?). Indeed, aside from the change in location (the heart of Vietnam rather than war-riddled Germany), there's not much difference between the two games. Of course, the fact is that we've played *Sniper Elite* – a game not due until early next year – and it's already rather good. Considering *Line Of Fire* is due out in less than a month and Atari has yet to demonstrate it to us, the alarm bells in our heads are already starting to ring…





DELAYED – GALLEON (MULTI)

■ It's the Marie Celeste of the videogaming world. Having been caught up in the wrangling of Virgin's 'will they, won't they' finance problems, Toby Gard's pirate adventure has once again sunk without trace.

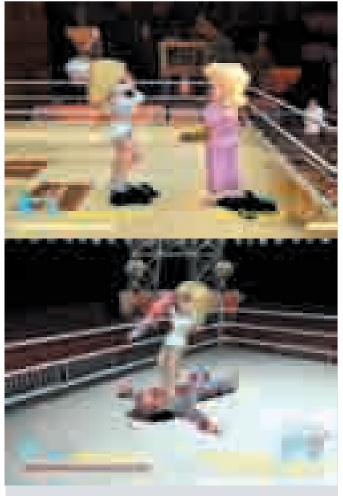
"THE DEVELOPERS AT PEOPLE CAN FLY ARE QUAKE WORLD CHAMPIONS AND APPRECIATE WHAT MAKES A GREAT MULTIPLAYER GAME"

PAINKILLER PRESS RELEASE

CELEBRITY DEATHMATCH

GOOD FIGHT, GOOD NIGHT

Format:	PS2/Xbox/GameCube/PC
Origin:	US
Publisher:	Take 2 Interactive
Developer:	Big Ape
Release:	Q3 '03
Genre:	Beat-'em-up
Players:	1-2



Here's a question for you – what do you get if you cross the all-out bloodletting of the *Mortal Kombat* series with the humour and claymation antics of *ClayFighter*? Probably something resembling *Celebrity Deathmatch*, the incredibly funny MTV show converted into a (so far proving to be average) videogame. It's a simple idea – pick your favourite celebrity from those on offer, then mutilate your opponent with all manner of weapons and moves. Fun, eh? Unfortunately, having played the game, it's a bit of a one-trick pony – unless you play it drunk with your mates, it's rather ordinary. Still, it's not every day you get to beat *NSYNC to a pulp.

PAINKILLER

ANYONE GOT ANY ASPIRIN?

Format:	PC
Origin:	Poland
Publisher:	Mindscape
Developer:	People Can Fly
Release:	October '03
Genre:	Shoot-'em-up
Players:	1-4 (Online TBC)

With first-person shooters these days being much of a muchness in terms of gameplay, it's up to the storylines to make each game more intriguing than its rivals. For instance, how many FPS games place you as a demon-slaying mercenary, slaughtering fiends for cash in order to upgrade your weapons? Not many, that's for sure. That's the premise of *Painkiller* – although things start to get more complicated as the plot unravels and treachery sets in. With some frantic blasting action (think *Serious Sam*, only with a point to it), downright nasty weapons and some of the prettiest graphics this side of *Doom III*, *Painkiller* certainly has the deck stacked in its favour.



MEGA MAN X7

THE LITTLE GUY IS BACK FOR MORE

Format:	PlayStation2
Origin:	Japan
Publisher:	Capcom
Developer:	In-House
Release:	October '03
Genre:	Platform
Players:	1



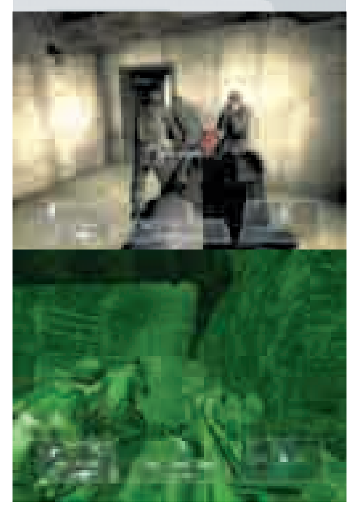
If you're a fan of the classic side-scrolling action that the previous NES, SNES and PSone *Mega Man* games offered (as we are), then Capcom's new *Mega Man* title might leave you somewhat confused. No, we're not talking about the transition from basic sprites to cel-shaded graphics, nor are we thinking of the ability to choose between three stalwart *Mega Man* characters – Mega Man, Axl or Zero. Instead, it's the slightly confusing mix of styles that bothered us. With traditional 2D action, *Crash Bandicoot*-style into-the-screen stages and bizarre isometric sections, it all seems a bit muddled for us. But we're sure it'll all turn out okay… won't it?

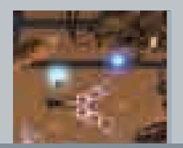
TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

LIKE THE BOOKS, ONLY BETTER

Format:	Xbox
Origin:	Canada
Publisher:	Ubi Soft
Developer:	Ubi Soft Montreal
Release:	Q3 '03
Genre:	Shoot-'em-up
Players:	1-4 (Online TBC)

And there we were, thinking that Ubi Soft would just port the PC version of *Rainbow Six: Raven Shield* to the Xbox. Thankfully, it appears that the French publishing giant has a bit more integrity than that – having since dropped the *Raven Shield* tagline from the upcoming Xbox game's title, we're now assured that it's a whole new game based on the universe of the PC version instead. It's got all the gameplay that we know (and love, on occasion) but most importantly, *Rainbow Six 3* will be fully compatible with Xbox Live. Cue the possibilities for not only downloadable mission content, but also frantic multiplayer action too. What more could you want, eh?





DELAYED – R-TYPE FINAL (PLAYSTATION2)

■ The final game in the series has slipped to the end of July, so it just missed the deadline for this issue. We'll have a full review next month.

> "UNREAL FANS ARE GETTING A NEW EXPERIENCE FEATURING DEVASTATING VEHICULAR COMBAT AND WIDE SCALE WARFARE"
>
> JEAN-PHILIPPE AGATI, SENIOR VP, ATARI LA

LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

HAIL TO THE KING, BABY

Format: PS2/Xbox/GC/PC/GBA
Origin: US
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Redwood Shores
Release: Q3 '03
Genre: Slash-'em-up
Players: 1-2





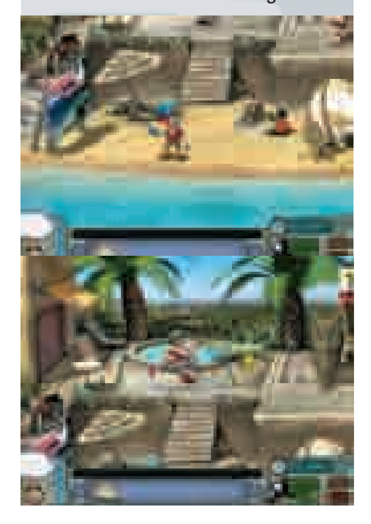
Having seen the success that *Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers* enjoyed not so long ago, it's only to be expected that a sequel should be in the offing. Even less surprising is the fact that new characters and stages aside, the core gameplay hasn't actually changed all that much; simply wade into a swathe of enemies, swinging your sword/axe/staff (delete as appropriate) for all it's worth. Not that we mind, of course – it might not have been the most absorbing of gameplay ideas, but as a film licence it worked. As long as the whole thing looks as pretty as it did before, it's obviously going to go down a storm with the fans.

NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL 2

THE HOLIDAYS ARE COMING…

Format: PC
Origin: Germany
Publisher: Big Ben Interactive
Developer: JoWood
Release: August '03
Genre: Puzzle
Players: 1

Now that's fast progress – having reviewed the first *Neighbours From Hell* game in issue six (and given it a respectable 7/10), news comes in of a sequel waiting in the wings for a late summer release. As before, you still control the devious Woody in an effort to ruin your neighbour's day without getting caught. How? By laying traps in a *Home Alone*-style, attempting to make him constantly angry through careful planning and evasion. It's a formula that works brilliantly and with the new expanded settings (your neighbour's on holiday, so expect to visit a cruise ship, beach and hotel) across 15 levels, it's sure to raise a few smiles all over again.



JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

GUNS, SPIES AND PUSSY GALORE

Format: PS2/Xbox/GC/PC/GBA
Origin: US
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Redwood Shores
Release: Q3 '03
Genre: Shoot-'em-up
Players: 1-4



If you've had the misfortune to play the atrocity that was *Tomorrow Never Dies* on the PSone (with its sloppy controls and bad game mechanics), you'll know that James Bond doesn't do third-person games well. That's why we're rather confused as to why EA's latest Bond outing, *007: Everything Or Nothing*, drops the FPS style of *Nightfire* and *Agent Under Fire* in favour of a third-person view. Sure, everything else appears to have remained intact – from the wide variety of weapons, Q's gadgets and even the facial and vocal talents of Mr Brosnan himself – but as for the perspective… Could EA be hoping to pull a Lara Croft on us? We hope not.

POKÉMON PINBALL: RUBY/SAPPHIRE

PIKACHU'S GOT SUCH A SUPPLE WRIST

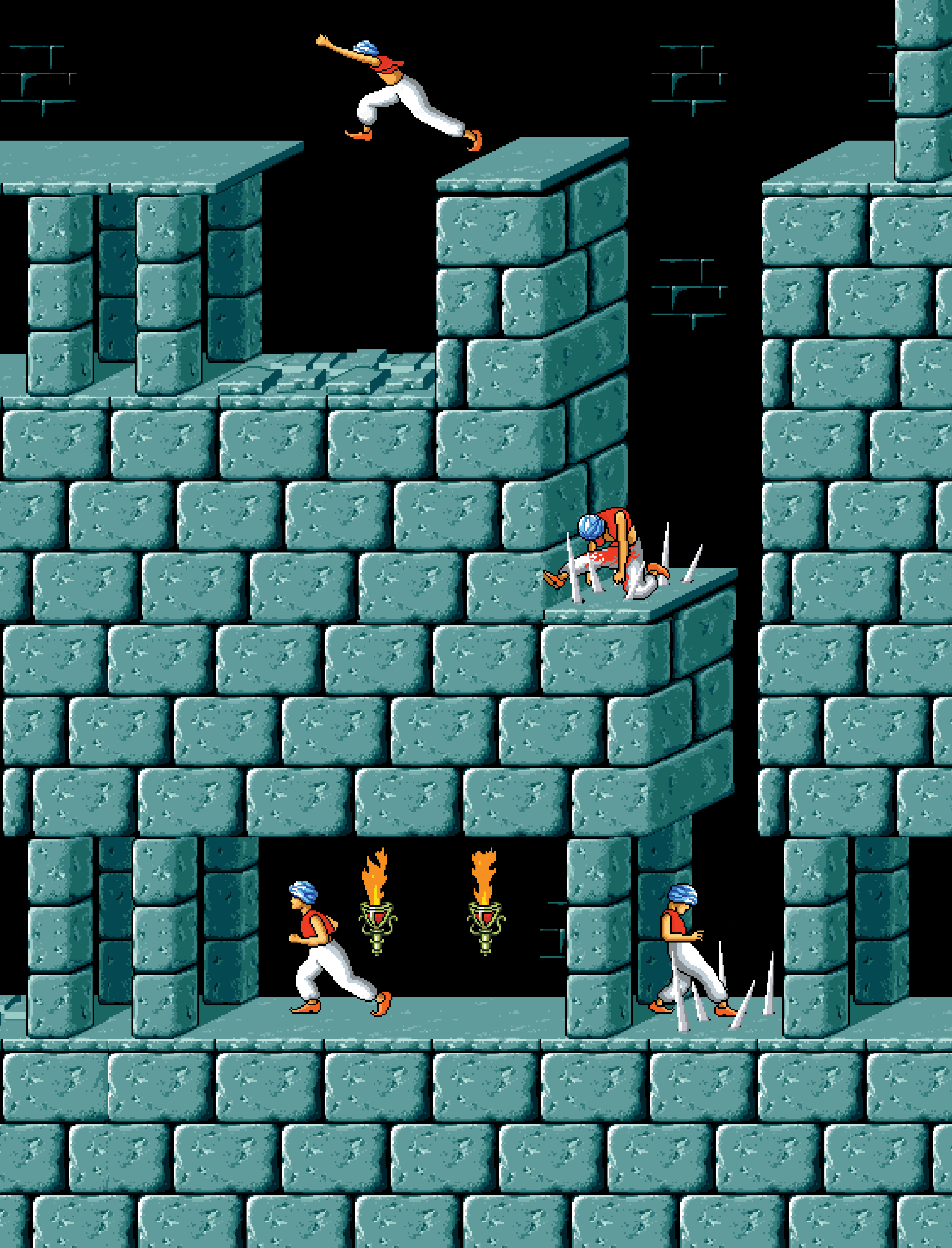
Format: Game Boy Advance
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Game Freak
Release: Q4 '03
Genre: Pinball
Players: 1

It's pinball, but with Pokémon – how much more self-explanatory can you get? Not much, we'll wager. Having found the last *Pokémon Pinball* far too compelling for our own good, there's no doubt that the Pokémon gravy train is going to keep rolling when this GBA update arrives at the end of the year. Things have been enhanced since the previous Game Boy Color outing – obviously, the graphics are a lot more colourful but, more importantly, the new *Ruby* and *Sapphire* elements mean there's now a total of 200 different monsters to catch as you bat the ball around. Not the greatest game ever, but no doubt we'll be hooked.





So many actions, so little time **Prince Of Persia Macintosh [Brøderbund] 1992**




GAME BOY ADVANCE SP



POCKET CHANGE

It's the best-selling console ever, it's dominated the market for over 13 years and it's got nothing to do with Sony – yet. Will the Game Boy live to see another year?

For years, people have argued over what a single format would do to the home console market. Would it stifle hardware innovation? Would it allow the manufacturer to charge whatever it wanted in development fees and game prices? Those that answer 'yes' have been labelled cynics, but a quick glance at the portable console market, which has been dominated by Nintendo's Game Boy since its release, would suggest the cynics weren't cynical enough.

Nintendo invented the handheld console in 1980 with the Game & Watch series, but the Game Boy, launched in 1989, was the world's first portable console with interchangeable game cartridges. It was fairly hefty and had a murky monochrome display but it delivered in the two most important areas for a portable: a relatively long battery life and games that were specifically tailored to the machine. It was a masterpiece of hardware design that inspired the famous "This should have been a Sony product" quote from Sony managers. Now it looks like Sony is committed to producing its own handheld, the PlayStation Portable (PSP). The PSP isn't due out until at least winter 2004, but in the ▷



"A single format would be very damaging for our industry"

GET YOURSELF CONNECTED

As soon as the GameCube was announced in Japan, one of the key features to get mentioned was its ability to link up with the GBA, with Nintendo making a number of increasingly desperate-sounding pleas to third parties to support the feature. But once again the company itself has been extremely slow to lead by example with only a few titles such as *Tetra's Trackers* and *Pac-Man* being unveiled at this year's E3. By the time these games actually come out though, the PSP will be a closer reality – as Mike Merren points out: "Sony is certainly going to be along a similar line but there will be many more connectivity options with the USB, so the PS2 (or PS3) PSX, PC, maybe even your USB Broadband modem can be connected to the PSP."

meantime Nintendo has got Nokia's N-Gage mobile phone/console hybrid to contend with and many are wondering whether it will manage even that hurdle.

That there can be so little faith in the Game Boy's ability to maintain its stranglehold gives some indication of how wrong many industry experts think Nintendo is getting it. Perhaps Nokia and Sony will learn from Nintendo's mistakes, but if they do, the loss of Nintendo's cash cow will have grave consequences for everyone – if Nintendo cannot survive without the Game Boy, can the industry survive without Nintendo?

In the early Nineties, Nintendo was doing everything right and reaping the financial rewards. The Game Boy's broad appeal helped it to become the most successful console in gaming history, selling over 142 million units. Nintendo ensured the console was supported with quality extensions of franchises such as *Mario* and *Zelda*, innovative new games like the multiplayer *F-1 Race* and *Kirby's Dreamland*, and the classic *Tetris*. All of which culminated in the Japanese release of *Pokémon* in 1996, a franchise which recently seems to have become the Game Boy's meal ticket.

Of course, the Game Boy was not without its challengers such as SEGA's Game Gear, Atari's Lynx or even Tiger's Game.com. Although all had a few good games, all had the same flaw: their battery lives were far shorter than the Game Boy's, usually because of their colour screens. In addition, when you consider the two-year head start Nintendo had and the hundreds of games developed for the Game Boy in this time, it's clear why handheld rivals never had a chance. As Simon Byron, a director at Barrington Harvey PR, points out: "Fighting the kind of installed user-base of Game Boy requires a vast war-chest. No-one, yet, has tried to enter the market with a significant marketing fund. Therefore, Sony will prove to be Game Boy's strongest competition to date." Bizarrely, each failed rival repeated the same mistakes, thereby handing Nintendo the keys to the whole portable market. Will Sony buck the trend?

Pokémon wasn't released in the West until 1999 and since the number of new Game Boy products created by Nintendo's first- and second-party developers had started to dry up it needed something



to shore up interest in the platform in the meantime. Its answer was the Game Boy Color which, although virtually identical to the old model in terms of processor power, did have a colour screen. But could Nintendo have aimed a bit higher than this? Simon Byron thinks so: "The lack of any serious competition has meant Nintendo has never had to significantly look at what it's doing and react accordingly to any real threat," he says.

What is particularly interesting about the effect the Game Boy's dominance has had on the portable market are the conclusions that can be drawn from it regarding the possibility of a single console format. Many have argued it would focus developers' efforts and make the market less confusing for non-gamers. But the experience of the Game Boy seems to suggest that any kind of single format can do nothing but harm. "A single format would be very damaging for our industry," says Mike Merren, development director at Climax Handheld (and previously of Crawfish). "Having games on different formats helps to push the quality bar for developers, and having a single hardware manufacturer that holds all the aces would be pretty scary."

As if to prove the point, the only other original product that Nintendo developed for the Game Boy Color was *Wario Land 3*. Clearly its attention was diverted by the N64 but it seems incredible that Nintendo's most profitable brand should have been left to fend for itself… almost. When *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* were finally released in the West, their enormous success meant that, once again, Nintendo managed to block off any serious competition.

Indeed, Nintendo may have been luckier than it realises since SNK's impressive Neo-Geo Pocket Color appeared in the same year and it was surely only a lack of developer support and SNK's empty bank account that caused its failure – certainly many would argue that it was the superior machine. In fact, in Japan, Bandai's Wonderswan attracted a significant amount of local developer support, particularly from Square, and briefly flowered as a result – proving that a rival portable console could succeed if it had the right games and the right price. Whether it was because of the new competition or because Nintendo ▷

RIP-OFF BRITAIN

Game Boy games seem too expensive to you? Not if you live in the US or Japan they wouldn't. Here's how the price of *A Link To The Past* compares with, to pick the current number-one home console game, *Enter the Matrix* on each of the three countries' versions of Amazon:

	A Link To The Past	*Enter the Matrix*
Amazon.co.uk	£26.99	£29.99
Amazon.co.jp	¥4,320 (£22.15)	¥5,780 (£29.64)
Amazon.com	$29.88 (£18.14)	$49.99 (£30.34)

Just to add insult to injury, the release of *A Link To The Past* in Europe (like almost all Nintendo Game Boy titles) was delayed by four months for, what can only be assumed as, Jack's reasons – and no, that doesn't mean it's being discounted in other countries because it's old – $29.88 is the standard price for all new GBA titles in the US. Nintendo's answer to this pecuniary inequality? "The final price of the product is decided by UK retailers and there are a number of different factors that affect this decision." Didn't you just know it was going to be somebody else's fault?



R.I.P

Just as the road to hell is paved with good intentions, the road to Nintendo's money pit is paved with the corpses of the failed portable consoles. And to think that those colour screens seemed such a good idea at the time…

LYNX (1989-1994)
FROM: Atari
FEATURES: Colour screen, approx. 100 games, ComLynx link-up cable
CAUSE OF DEATH: Battery life of less than four hours (or only one hour with rechargeable batteries)
NEXT OF KIN: None

GAME GEAR (1991-1996)
FROM: SEGA
FEATURES: Colour screen, approx. 300 games, TV tuner and Master System games converter
CAUSE OF DEATH: Battery life of less than two hours
NEXT OF KIN: Nomad (portable Mega Drive)

GAME.COM (1997-1999)
FROM: Tiger
FEATURES: Monochrome touch screen, 20 games including 'mature' titles (including Duke Nukem and like Duke Evil), Internet Resident functionality and PDA functionality
CAUSE OF DEATH: Weak marketing and poor screen display
NEXT OF KIN: Game.com Pocket Pro, Game.com Pocket Pro Light

NEO GEO POCKET COLOR (1999-2001)
FROM: SNK
FEATURES: Colour display, approx. 60 games, wireless control adapter, Dreamcast link-up functionality
CAUSE OF DEATH: Lack of company funding
NEXT OF KIN: Neo Geo Pocket

WONDERSWAN (1999-2003)
FROM: Bandai
FEATURES: High-resolution monochrome screen, two sets of player controls, approx. 150 games, HandySonar (for fishing)
CAUSE OF DEATH: No Western release
NEXT OF KIN: Wonderswan Color, Wonderswan Crystal

TURBOEXPRESS – PC ENGINE GT (1990-1995)
FROM: NEC
FEATURES: Colour screen, approx. 400 games, plays TurboGrafx-16 / PC Engine CEHuCARDs
CAUSE OF DEATH: Weak marketing and distribution outside Japan
NEXT OF KIN: PC Engine LT

ET TU MICROSOFT?

Even before the GBA backlash, many people were wondering whether Microsoft might too be considering a move into the portable market, especially with its experience of palmtop PCs. For the moment though, it's made its position very clear: "Right now we are singularly focused on innovating great games and new features for Xbox and Xbox Live." Perhaps it's for the best anyway, because considering the size and weight of the Xbox one has to wonder just how much of a grip Microsoft has on the concept of portability…

"Nintendo will have to be more aggressive if it's to prevent the migration of Game Boy owners to the PSP"

finally realised that the addition of a colour screen was not much to show for twelve years' R&D, it released the Game Boy Advance in 2001. At first, it seemed that Nintendo was doing everything right – the GBA was more powerful than a SNES and although it didn't really have any 3D capabilities, the promise of a return to the golden age of 2D graphics and back-to-basics gameplay appealed to many.

Consumers were expecting a true evolutionary leap from the older models, yet the screen was all but invisible unless it was in direct light. Problem number two was the games. Yet again Nintendo, famed for its original titles, released nothing but remakes (although subsequent second-party titles like the superb *Advance Wars* and *WarioWare, Inc.* have proved to be the exception to the rule of SNES ports and unambitious sequels to *Pokémon* and *Metroid*). With these rehashed games, it seems entirely possible that Sony could beat the GBA the way it beat Nintendo with the PSone – by getting the developers on its side. Nintendo licensing for the Game Boy is famously expensive and it's likely Sony will try to woo developers with cheaper deals. "Licensing costs [on the GBA] for publishers have come down recently but still not enough in my opinion," says Merren. "The cartridge format makes it so hard for people to make money that this takes many publishers out of the GBA market."

The often lacklustre games haven't stopped the GBA selling well in the US and Japan, where it often manages to outsell the PS2. In Europe though, and particularly the UK, the GBA usually trails behind the home consoles. This is due in part to what Cat Channon, PR manager at Take 2, calls the "Japanese penchant for all things pocket-sized", which the Americans are quick to copy, but mostly because of the vastly increased game prices that we pay in the UK. Despite poor European sales, the Game Boy still suffers from an almost total absence of any new original product. Combined with the GameCube's increasingly weak position this seems the perfect time for other manufacturers to strike. "I think that the market has been stagnant over the last nine months, but things are going to start to move forward this year," says Merren. "New format announcements start a groundswell of interest from publishers and developers and I think the excitement will grow through the year as development systems are made available."

The first new Game Boy competitor will be Nokia's N-Gage in October. Selling for around £230 this mixture of mobile phone, games console, MP3 player and radio is by far the most expensive console around. But as far as Mark Squires, director of Nokia's corporate communications, is concerned, this jumble of features is the console's trump card, not its Achilles heel. "I actually think people like convergence," he says. "At the end of the day we're doing pukka 3D games – for the first time you've got real 3D gaming in your hand. We've got all these other features because we can do them. People are going to love the social aspect of playing over a local or wide area network."

Merren isn't so sure: "The problem the N-Gage is going to have is that it may fall between two stalls," he says. "Is it a games machine being a phone or a phone being a games machine? It is so obviously a phone, and the clunkiness of inserting game sims is going to put people off. It's going to be too expensive unless the phone companies subsidise it and there is a danger that the technology is going to be out of date in six months time."

Although the N-Gage is likely to do better than some previous Game Boy rivals, most industry observers think it's just the opening gambit of the real portable console war. Due out in Japan in late 2004, virtually nothing is known about Sony's PSP save that Sony has made some characteristically over-the-top claims about its technical prowess. What cannot be overestimated though, is the danger it poses to Nintendo. Without the Game Boy, Nintendo loses the safety net that ensures any failures in the home console market can be absorbed. Failure in both markets and it could well be game over for the big N.

As for the PSP, Merren is enthusiastic. "If it can do what it says on the tin, then we're in for some fun times," he says. "If the MPEG 4 compression is true and you can get two-hour movies to DVD quality and be able to play music, then we are looking at a machine that will be the boy's toy of choice and will be a big seller. The problem for the games industry is if people buy the machine and don't intend to play games."

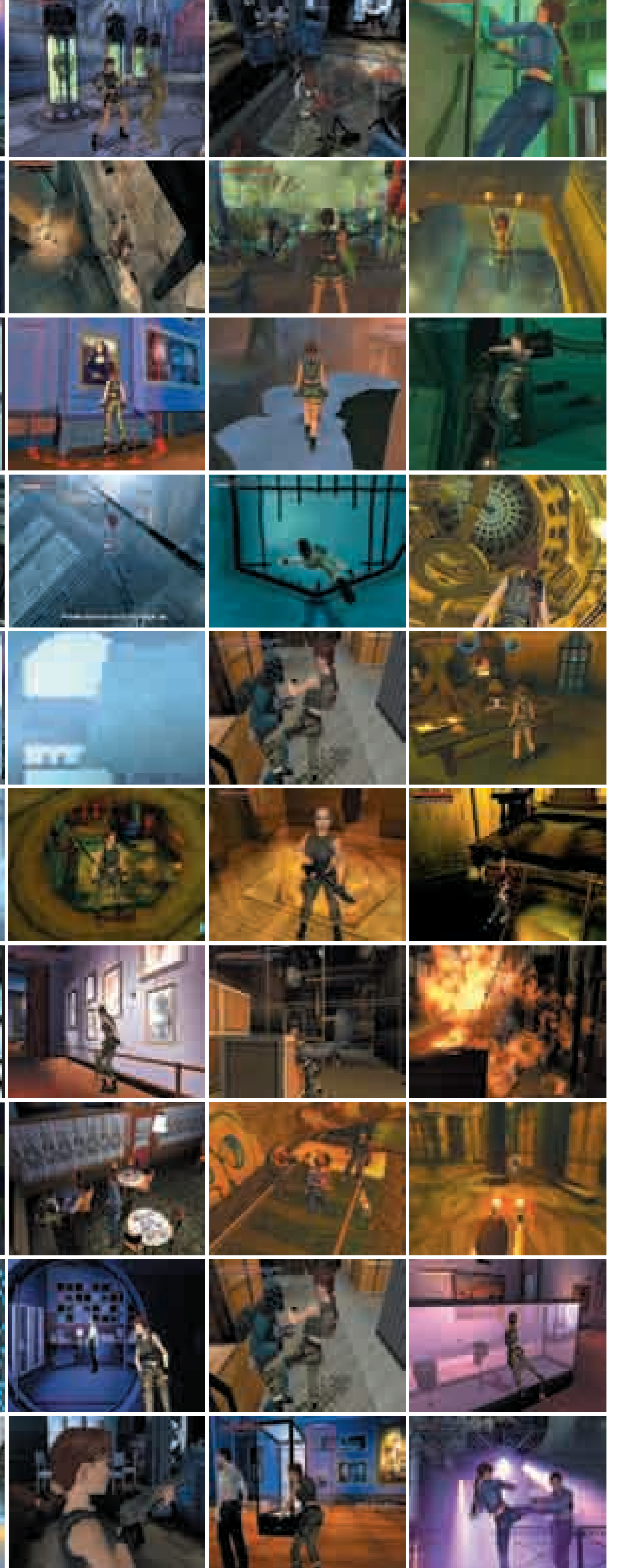
If just half of the PSP hype is true it seems that even the GBA SP has little chance against it, certainly not if Nintendo's answer is a couple more choices of colour for the console and *Super Mario Advance 5: Another Excuse Not To Make A New Game*. If the GBA's new FX chip – which will give some games improved 3D capabilities – seems like yet another quick fix Nintendo is certainly not making any mention of a GBA3 just yet. "Undoubtedly there will be a number of companies who try to enter the handheld gaming market, as there have been before," says Friend, "but only time will tell if they are still around in two years' time." This may seem arrogant, but Nintendo does at least have history, and the grave of many a Game Boy wannabe, on its side.

An industry without Nintendo is a worrying thought, but when so many of its problems are brought on by complacency it becomes more difficult to find excuses for it. As Simon Byron says: "The next year or so will see Nintendo having to be more aggressive if it is to prevent a migration of Game Boy owners to the PSP. It's going to be very interesting and, ultimately, good news for videogames players."

If the Game Boy's fall from grace puts an end to the concept of the single format and revitalises the portable market, that could be Nintendo's final legacy. 



It's been a while, but Lara's found her way back to our consoles. Was it worth waiting for her to turn up? Or should we have nicked off down the pub and just left a note on the front door?



REVIEWS

THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games™** is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five, you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad, we'll make sure you know; if it's great, we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.



Those Neotanks are a force to be reckoned with, and in about three seconds that APC and its contents will be vaporised. Ouch.

Cute ickle maps they may be, but go up close and those dinky soldiers are dealing out the worst sort of death.

Anti-Air units can defeat infantry and airborne foes but we're not so sure about those behemoths…

You're not restricted to tanks – your war-mongering can be done in the air and at sea if that's what you fancy.

games™ ENHANCED

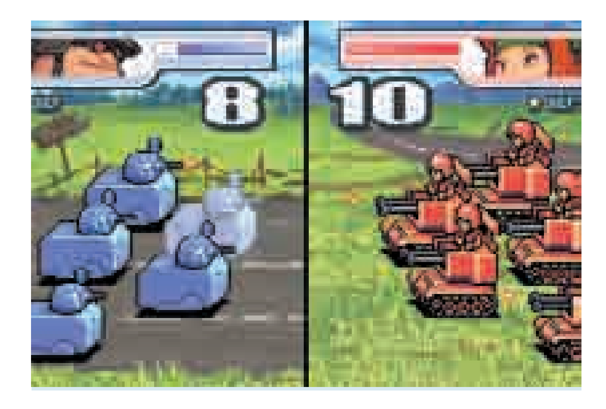
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

NEW RECRUITS: Several new units have joined in the offensive, adding a little more variety.

STAR-STUDDED: Campaign Mode puts you in the shoes of a wider selection of generals this time.

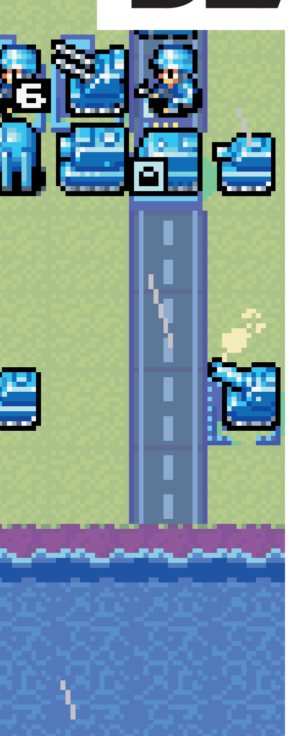






THE WORLD'S SMALLEST ARMIES DO BATTLE ONCE MORE

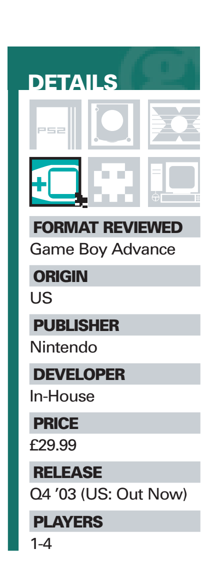
ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING



It's pretty fair to say that console strategy games rarely compare with their PC rivals. Obviously, there is the odd exception but on the whole a computer is simply better suited to the genre – the freedom and ease of the mouse/keyboard combo lends itself far better to keeping control of a large number of units. Of all the consoles, then, surely the least likely to make a go of a strategy title is the Game Boy Advance with its tiny screen and distinct lack of buttons. Despite this logical deduction, one of last year's finest brainteasers came courtesy of the handheld platform and did well enough both critically and commercially to spawn a sequel. That sequel, as you have no doubt already gathered, is *Advance Wars 2.*

Before the game even begins, your attention is drawn to the underlying nature of the subject matter and, moreover, the way in which it has been tackled. This is war. Explosions, armies and actual death certainly aren't your regular staple ingredients in a Nintendo game, but all the carnage and mayhem is strangely counterbalanced by the cute and colourful presentation – only Nintendo could make tanks lovable. Everything from the design of the vehicles and the colours used thereon to the in-game dialogue (young Andy constantly chirps about how much fun he's having) just makes the otherwise horrible subject that much easier to swallow. It'll even get to the point where you're not even thinking about the fact that your chunky tanks are massacring swarms of men – something of an achievement and no mistake.

If you missed out on the original (shame on you), let us recap the basic premise. *Advance Wars 2* is a turn-based strategy game that operates on fairly basic 'rock-paper-scissors'-type mechanics – certain units are effective against another while weak to the attacks of others. If this weren't so rigid and well balanced the whole game would fall into disarray, but as you've probably guessed from our positivity thus far, this is far from the case. There is a small element of chance in the final damage calculations but this is welcome – since every Commanding Officer is treated the same, you're never at a disadvantage. On the other side of the coin, COs do now differ greatly and, what's more, it's been made easier to see just how. On top of the screens that summarise their abilities and powers, an entire grid is included with how every unit fares under each CO. Max, for instance, excels with direct units such as tanks but lacks proficiency with



FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£29.99

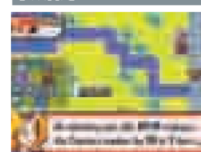
RELEASE
Q4 '03 (US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-4

24:00 TIMELINE HIGHLIGHTS

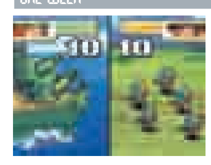
THE BEST BITS IN THE GAME AND WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE THEM...

24 HOURS



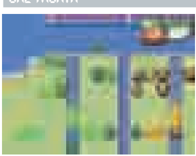
Even after a whole day with *Advance Wars 2*, you'll have barely scratched the surface. A few missions down in Campaign Mode, Nell will still be giving the tutorial...

ONE WEEK



Chances are you've made good progress through the huge campaign now. With lots of missions available you're spoilt for choice, but they don't get any easier.

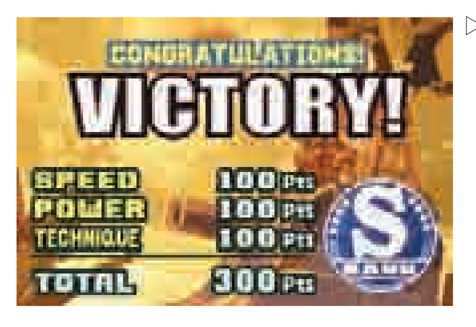
ONE MONTH



You really will still be going after a month. Be it going through Campaign again to improve your rank, battling in the War Room or Versus play, there's still plenty left.







PAK ATTACK

In all the multiplayer modes we've seen in our Game Boy adventures, *Advance Wars 2* has what must be the finest selection of modes and options ever crammed onto a cartridge. Want to play a round with four players on one GBA? You got it. Fancy teaming up with a pal and taking on a vicious AI opponent? Go for it. The game allows for both single-pak and multi-pak link play, as well as a welcome option to do battle on a single handheld just by passing it around. All of this was admittedly also present last time around but with the extended selection of maps, COs and units in this sequel, its hard not to be impressed even by the familiar. Either way, the prospect of subjecting your nearest and dearest to a Neotank-based pounding is certainly not to be sniffed at...

ranged units, while Sami's proficiency lies with infantry units that perform far better under her than under any other CO. Since you'll have access to more Commanders as the game goes on, you'll be able to develop strategies around your own style a lot more easily than before, and the variety in battles also increases accordingly.

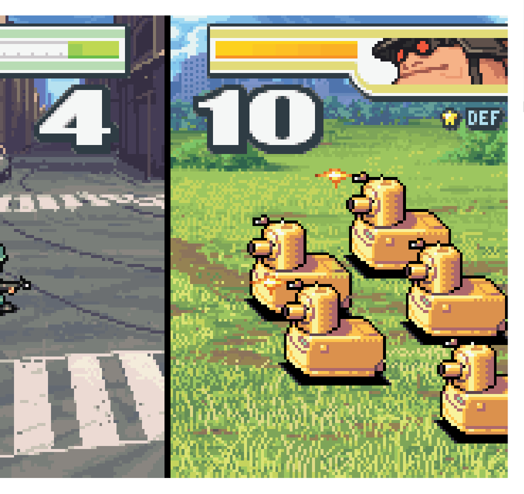
One of the key enhancements in this ambitious sequel is the range of the missions in Campaign Mode. Since this now covers four separate player-controlled armies, you'll already be using cosmetically and statistically different troops for many missions before we even come to the subject matter. This is where it really comes into its own, however – if you're expecting to just annihilate enemies and capture bases, you've got another thing coming. Timed victory or survival, simple A-to-B missions and new event structures (usable missile silos, giant turrets and impenetrable factories all make appearances) just go to make the main game mode that much more engrossing and replayable.

Addictiveness is a curious thing; games that have it tend to be the pick-up-and-play arcadey kind like *Super Monkey Ball* or *Crazy Taxi*. It's very rare for a title (or, in fact, a genre) that involves making a commitment to command the player's full attention, but on rare occasions such as this, it does. Somehow, both the original *Advance Wars* and now its impressive sequel possess a certain *je ne sais quoi* that makes them impossible to put down. When battles are taking upwards of an hour at a time, this shouldn't even be possible but we shan't complain – thanks to this little beauty, our bus journeys, awkward waits and even theme park queues have simply flown by. Even the toughest missions with the odds stacked against you are a joy to play and we've kept going back to the huge War Room maps only to send out countless troops like lambs to the slaughter and emerge defeated time after time. The fact that even losing a two-hour brawl can be enjoyable is fitting testament to the game's overall quality and really makes you wonder where so many other games go wrong.

If you ever even manage to finish the main Campaign Mode, you'll be amazed with the amount of the game you still haven't touched upon. Cash you earn from mission grades can be spent on new COs and battle maps, and to simply play every map through once would take weeks. If you ever somehow tire of the well-designed maps served up by the game, you can try your hand at making your own. The editor is as near perfect as the rest of the game – you're able to place practically every unit and terrain seen in the game for use in Versus play.

Admit it; you've already looked at the score and are wondering what robs *Advance Wars 2* of gaming perfection – in all fairness, very little. The only real criticisms we've had are with the AI and the sheer difficulty of some of the later missions, particularly if you're brave (or perhaps stupid) enough to attempt the game on its hardest difficulty setting. The latter really only channels you into a certain route to victory and hints at this are often given after losing the battle, but the artificial intelligence issue is the only one with which we could claim to be disappointed to

"IF YOU EVER MANAGE TO FINISH THE MAIN CAMPAIGN MODE, YOU'LL BE AMAZED BY HOW MUCH YOU STILL HAVEN'T TOUCHED UPON"



Those little guys may have the territorial advantage but they still don't stand a chance here. Sorry chaps.



Learn to fear the glowing units – they've been augmented by a CO ability, so steer well clear. Super Powers are even scarier, unless they're on your side, of course.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

A slight annoyance for many with the original *Advance Wars* was a noticeable unbalance in the CO abilities. Thankfully, this has been rectified in quite a clever way. This time around, each Officer has two abilities available – a regular CO Power and an all-conquering Super Power. This balances the battles out a lot better, adding even more strategy – do you save up for a Super or use many lesser powers? A lot of this will depend on who you use; Colin, for example, has a CO Power that boosts his cash flow and a Super that boosts attack power based on his bank balance – it doesn't take a genius to realise that this is a horribly potent combination. Furthermore, this increased variety within the cast makes all the modes that much more interesting and customisable – however you like to play, chances are you'll be able to find a CO with powers and abilities that perfectly complement your style.

any extent. Usually, the CPU players will play effectively and tactically but very occasionally you'll be left wondering why they attacked a certain unit or moved to a strange location. We managed to bottleneck eight units into a standstill simply by placing a tank in front of a foot soldier leading an enemy brigade, since the infantrymen are reluctant to attack a solid metal box on wheels and the units behind are reluctant to retreat. As we've mentioned though, such situations are rare and brief to the extent that you could probably clear a Campaign without really ever calling the AI into question.

The big question on the tip of many tongues will undoubtedly be 'Is this worth getting if I own the original?' and there's a simple answer to that – yes. Even without the wealth of new material on offer, *Advance Wars 2* would still be a valid purchase on the grounds that it would be more of the same great gameplay we enjoyed so much first time around. Once you add the benefits of new units, maps, options, buildings and possibilities, we're sure you'll agree that while familiar, the whole package is enough to warrant a second conscription. Believe the hype (if there even is any) – *Advance Wars 2* is the best GBA game so far this year.

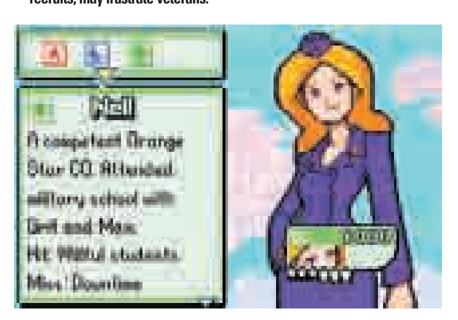


VERDICT 9/10

PORTABLE STRATEGY DOESN'T GET MUCH BETTER



Rather than a separate Field Training mode, tuition is done in-game which, while great for new recruits, may frustrate veterans.



Air hostess lookalike Nell will guide you through the game's basics.

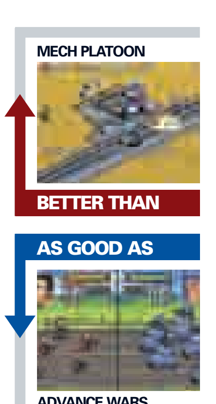
You'll want to stop those rocket launchers before you're spotted…

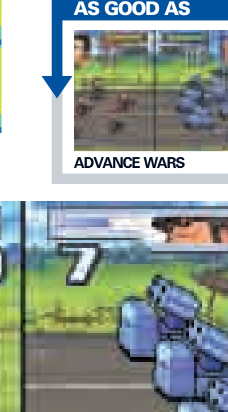
FAQs

Q. HOW MANY MISSIONS?
Around 30 in the main Campaign (plus hidden ones) before you even get started on the Versus maps and the Map Editor…

Q. HOW LONG?
To do everything, you're looking at in excess of a hundred hours. Multiplayer potential increases this further still.

Q. MORE OF THE SAME?
Of course, but there are more than enough tweaks and refinements to keep the game feeling fresh.






That's right – it's Lara Croft, Nightclub Raider. Of course, there's no dancing to be done, but plenty of climbing on boxes. Really.


Lara gives hints at the start to help learn the way, but even once you've mastered the controls, she'll continue to state the bleedin' obvious.


Lara's still a fine figure of a woman, with nerves of steel, an iron will and, if this picture's anything to go by, asbestos buttocks.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
PC

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Eidos Interactive

DEVELOPER
Core Design

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

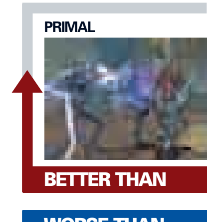
WE'VE WAITED AN EXTRA SIX MONTHS… FOR THIS?

LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER:THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

So here's the thing: it's now 10:43am and we've been sat indoors playing *Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness* for pretty much five days solid now. We've laughed at the oh-so-subtle bouncing animations of Lara's ample bosom, argued about which way to go next and cursed loudly having watched Lara get shot, stabbed, crushed, sliced, burnt, blown up, drowned and sent plummeting to her doom for the millionth time. Despite all this though, the one thing we just can't help but wonder is why the game isn't, well, better. Now, that's not to say that *TR:AOD* is a bad game – it's just that having waited nigh-on three years for Lara's first PS2 outing, we were hoping for (though not necessarily expecting) something a bit more revolutionary. Rather than being the all-new Lara that we all wanted though, what we've actually got is the same old Lara doing pretty much what she's been doing for the last seven years; albeit with new clumsy analogue controls, a handful of adjusted abilities and a bit of a graphical facelift.

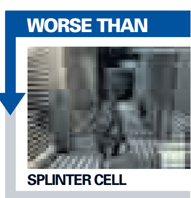
On the gameplay front, it's at least a good thing that Core has clearly tried to go back to basics… sometimes. Occasionally, you'll encounter areas that bring back memories of the first *Tomb Raider* and contain much of the gameplay that earned Lara so many fans in the first place – mainly the sections where it's just Lara on her own, solving puzzles and pushing blocks. Unfortunately, these stages are fairly rare; much of the time, you'll be plodding through uninspiring passageways and around dingy exterior areas, fighting faceless

PRIMAL



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



SPLINTER CELL


Rooms like this, where you have no idea how you're going to get up there, are too few and far between.

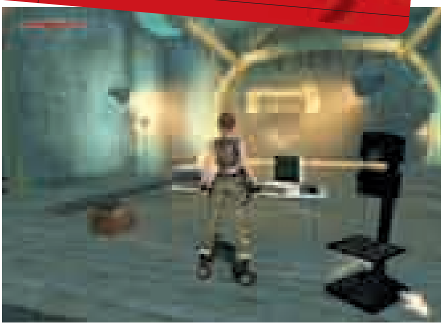

Oh, look – it's one of the four obligatory 'rooms based on the elements'. So this would be, er, fire?

ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

UP YOU GO: Lara's new free-climb ability gives her more freedom when negotiating cliffs and ledges.

I FEEL STRONGER: Unless you get all the strength upgrades, you can't reach many secret items.



Some of the puzzles are pretty basic – for instance, this x-ray machine lets you scan the floor until you find a hidden clue. Talk about obvious…

Watch the meter at the top of the screen – if it runs out, you'll be flatter than a pancake.

FAQs

Q. GRAPHICAL IMPROVEMENTS?
Lara's made up of more polygons and has more frames of animation, but to be honest it doesn't look as nice as half the games around today. And why has she got square fingers, eh?

Q. HOW'S THE COMBAT?
Varied. Lara's lost her magical pistols (which had infinite ammunition), so gunplay has to be interspersed with bouts of fisticuffs. Sadly, she fights like a sissy; a sissy soaked in treacle.

Q. WHO'S KURTIS TRENT?
The man you take control of when Lara's taking a breather – but *Krull*-esque throwing star (which he never uses) aside, he's not much cop compared to his female counterpart.

adversaries – henchmen, guards, whatever – with a combination of standard gunfire and all-new (not to mention god-awful) hand-to-hand combat.

Of course, while *TR:AOD* has proven that you can't teach an old dog new tricks, Core Design has at least made those tricks more difficult to pull off in an effort to spice things up a little. For example, Lara's new Last Chance grab certainly makes something as simple as grasping a ledge all the more demanding/challenging/downright frustrating: rather than holding the Action button to grab the ledge ahead or below, you now have to hit it just as the ledge comes within reach. Clever, eh? In principle, yes – but once you miss what appears to be a relatively simple jump or grip change for the tenth time in succession because of it (and die as a result of the drop that follows), we doubt that'll be the word that springs to mind.

It's not just these 'improved' moves that'll have you screaming blue murder, though; the new analogue controls leave a lot to be desired too. According to the press release, "the previous 'grid-based' control system has been replaced with a much more intuitive system." Really? We could have sworn that taking away the ability to judge jumping and falling distances easily makes controlling Lara with any modicum of confidence rather difficult indeed. Also, the switch to analogue control means that making Lara do what you want can, at times, prove more trouble than it's worth. Thanks to the constant flicking between free-roaming and fixed camera angles (plus the fact that Lara often takes ages just to get up to a plodding jog), you'll find yourself dying over and over just because you ventured a little too close to the edge. That's the biggest problem here – for a game that encourages players to explore, there are too many instances where curiosity will mangle, impale,



drown or otherwise flatten the cat. The twitchy controls mean that instant death is just a flick of the analog stick away, and we can guarantee you'll die many, many times just trying to either work out where you've got to go or nab yourself a handful of bonus items. It might seem logical to move Lara's world forward in this way but if it's detrimental to the gameplay, you can hardly call it progress.

And that's pretty much Lara's latest adventure summed up in a nutshell – a logical step forward, but with two steps taken back when it comes to the enjoyment. The sparks of hope you may have when first entering areas like the Hall Of Seasons or the Bio-Research Facility (both of which create the 'How the hell do I get around here?' feeling the first game had) are pretty much doused by the dodgy controls and all the trudging through boring areas you'll face elsewhere. True, it's not the worst *Tomb Raider* game ever – but if you sliced it in two, you'd most certainly find the words 'frustratingly average' written right through the middle.

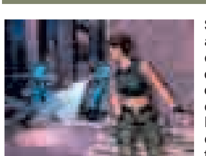
I'VE GOT THE POWER

Maybe it's old age setting in, but poor old Lara appears to be have lost her touch; her ability to leap massive gaps and shimmy along ledges indefinitely has left her. Thankfully, the good news is that you can help her improve her skills by 'collecting' various upper and lower body strength upgrades. By completing key tasks such as moving crates, clambering along wires or breaking locks off doors with your crowbar, Lara will tell you that she 'feels stronger' – this will, in turn, usually allow you to complete a nearby task that was previously beyond you. Sadly, having certain tasks to increase your skills can be a bit of a pain, especially when, for example, moving a crate in one direction yields an upgrade and yet pushing it anywhere else draws a blank. Bad game design? You tell us…



NOT THAT BAD, BUT NOT THAT GOOD EITHER

PC £29.99 OUT NOW



Sharper graphics aside, PC *AOD* is no different from its PS2 cousin. And of course the game gets even harder if you haven't got a dedicated controller to play with…





FAQs

Q. HOW LONG IS IT?
Around ten hours to reach the end (not including all the times you'll inevitably die) plus whatever extra time you put in finding all the Chips and upgrades.

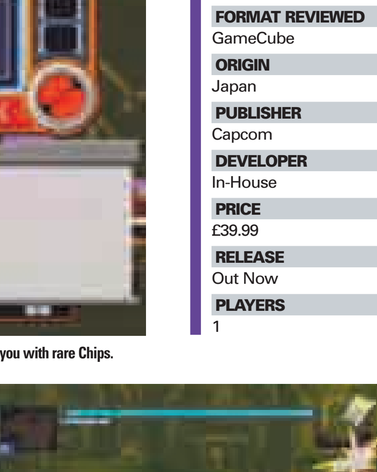
Q. DIFFICULT?
Very much so. The first hour or so will have you tearing your hair out but it does get easier. Perseverance is the key…

Q. REPLAY VALUE?
In a *Pokémon* kind of way, yes. Although the game itself isn't exactly epic, getting all the Chips will take you a good while.

MEGA MAN



Interacting with other Navis (defeating them, rescuing them and the like) often rewards you with rare Chips.



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Capcom

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

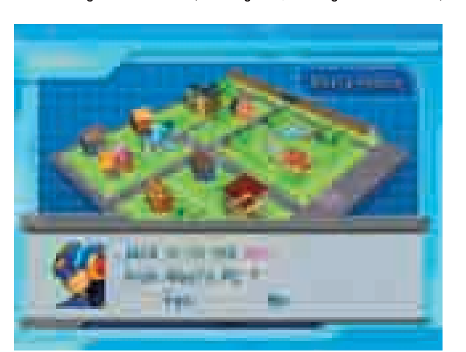
RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

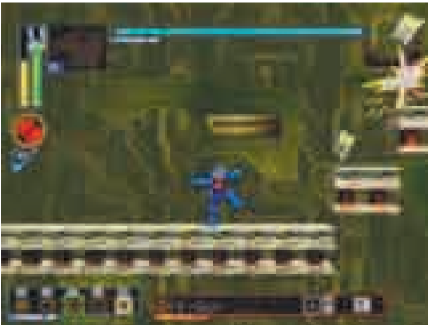
If you're the kind of person who likes an easy ride in terms of gaming, turn the page now.** If you get frustrated easily while playing videogames, turn the page now. If you just plain don't like Mega Man, we once again advise you to turn the page – any of these factors will hamper, if not destroy, your enjoyment of *Network Transmission*. Not that we expected it to be anything else, but this is one tricky game. Within the first ten minutes, you're thrown up against a surprisingly tough boss character and it isn't long after that before you'll face another worthy (read: horribly difficult) opponent.

The concept behind *Network Transmission* is a simple one; mix the collectable card aspect of the *Battle Network* series on Game Boy Advance with the classic platform action synonymous with the name Mega Man. It's certainly an interesting fusion and while we'd never have thought it would work, we're happy to be wrong for once. Linearity is one of the game's letdowns – you don't even get to control Lan (Mega Man's owner, if you will) between areas as all exploration is done through a simple map. This isn't so much a criticism as an observation – given the similarities to, and influence of, the GBA games, we were expecting slightly more freedom than just the ability to return to old areas.

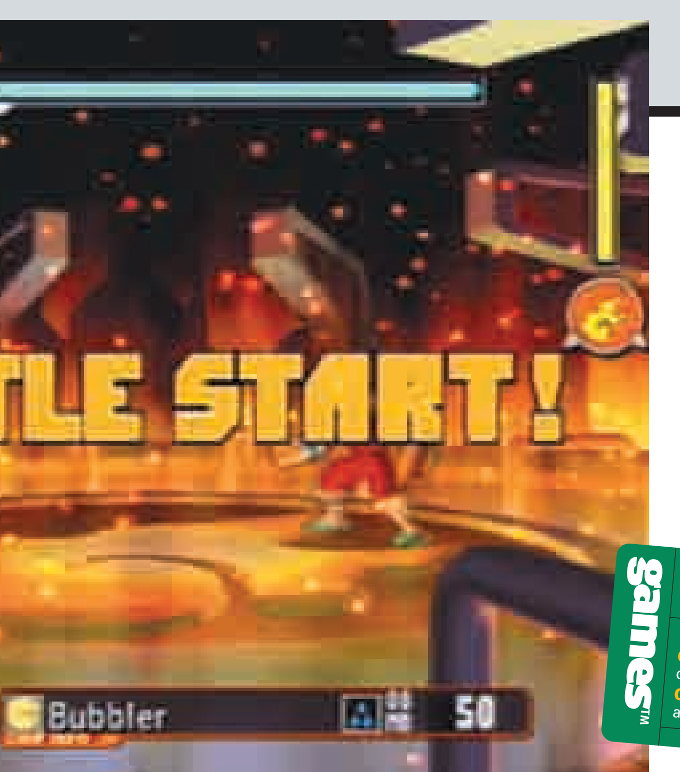
The difficulty level is both a curse and a blessing here – far be it from us to complain about a game being hard but there are times when *Network Transmission* is just downright unfair. Enemies respawn relentlessly pretty much as soon



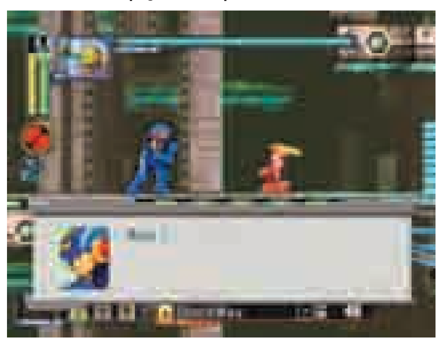
This is the extent of your freedom in AC/DC Town. As you progress, you'll be able to jack in from most of these locations.



Mega Man's 2.5D, cel-shaded look isn't going to appeal to everyone, but see it in action and you'll be much more impressed.



■ *Network Transmission* is the perfect blend of *Mega Man* genres – a bit of RPG, a bit of leaping all over the place. Just what we like.



HOOK ME UP

Somewhat bizarrely, *Network Transmission* doesn't feature any kind of GBA-GC connectivity with existing *Mega Man* titles or forthcoming ones. On paper, this is the ultimate playground for said linkage – trading Chips and switching to GBA control when you 'jack in' would be the most feasible options, although the potential is far greater. Strangely, though, there's nothing of the sort even though much less-suited titles offer link-up as little more than a throwaway extra. The only connectivity going on is between the two versions of *Battle Network 3*. Taking its cues from Japan's finest *Pocket Monsters* games, the two versions each feature Chips unavailable in the other. For now though, put away that GBA-GC link cable.

games™ **FUSED**

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

OLD SCHOOL: The platform elements have a decidedly retro feel to them.

CATCH 'EM ALL: Collectable Chips add variety and originality to the proceedings.

NETWORK TRANSMISSION

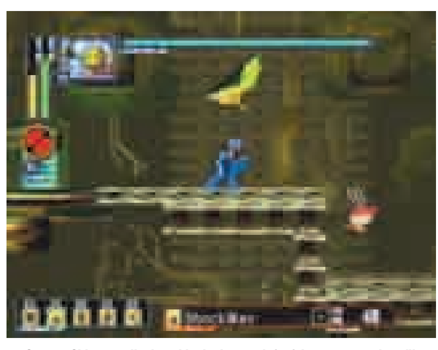
CAPCOM'S HERO CELEBRATES HIS FIFTEENTH BIRTHDAY IN STYLE…

as you get a screen's length away and in certain places combinations of foes positioned together make it very hard to make progress without the right sub-weapons. For the most part though, the action is frustrating in its difficulty but does at least give you a chance. Bosses are another matter entirely, presenting us with some of the most challenging encounters in recent memory. Thankfully, the level playing field is retained for the majority of these and they do a grand job of ending each area in a suitably climactic manner.

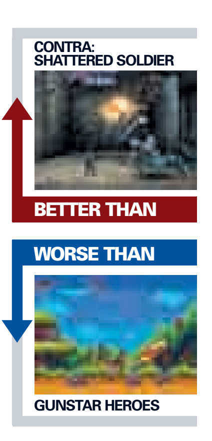
The reason for the game's staggeringly tough opening is obvious enough – it can be pinned squarely on the Chips (collectable attack cards) system that governs your special weapons. Not only do you start out with a less than impressive deck but the cards you get to choose from are just a random selection, meaning it's easy to be caught short when there are only a few really useful tools on hand. As the game progresses and your pack fills with rare and powerful Chips, you'll notice the initial difficulty barrier crumble before you. In addition, upgrades also help your cause and provide a greater amount of health, more lives (these are replenished every time you jack out of the network) and upgrades to Mega Man's armour and basic armaments to help you on your way.

The unique graphical style will serve only to hammer *Network Transmission* further into its niche. Combining two techniques that have split the gaming community (namely cel-shading and the 2.5D viewpoint) certainly won't help it achieve universal recognition. What they will do, however, is give the game a distinct look that has to be seen in motion to be truly appreciated. Mega Man moves as smoothly as ever and controlling him through hours of inch-perfect jumps and rapid blasting is every bit as precise and intuitive as it should be. Environments are suitably varied if a little simplistic but it would be all too easy for the play field to become cluttered, making an already tricky game harder still. Sonically less spectacular, there'll be nothing pumping forth from your speakers that will change your life but on the other hand, you shouldn't be needing that mute button…

Above all, *Mega Man Network Transmission* impresses most because it attempts something new and actually carries it off. It does find itself in a rather paradoxical situation, though. Fans of the traditional *Mega Man* games may find this too far removed from the usual reaction tests while those who prefer the GBA RPGs may find this side of the game a little shallower than usual. Seen for what it is, *Network Transmission* is a fine example of how genres can be spliced to good effect. While it certainly isn't flawless, it must be commended for bringing fresh ideas to a fairly predictable series. If you're a fan of Little Boy Blue, chances are you'll be in a better position to get maximum enjoyment out of this, but either way, *Network Transmission* is a good solid title that has little to no competition on the GameCube or in this generation full stop.



■ Current Chips are displayed in the bottom left of the screen and you'll get a fresh set every few minutes.



VERDICT 7/10

AN ACCOMPLISHED AND ORIGINAL NICHE TITLE

CAN THIS REALLY COMPETE WITH THE LIKES OF HALO AND TIMESPLITTERS 2?

MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PS2, GameCube

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Vivendi

DEVELOPER
Warthog

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
15 August
(GameCube: Sept TBC)

PLAYERS
1

BETTER THAN
DIE HARD VENDETTA



WORSE THAN
TIMESPLITTERS 2

First-person shooters to the current generation are much like platform games were to the 16-bit era – a new one seems to hit the shelves every week, though decent ones are few and far between. With such levels of saturation, it seems strange that developers should want to risk producing a second-rate product that might not sell when they could just as easily create something more eye-catching in a less-populated genre. These days, when it comes to the FPS, developers either need to invent something new and exciting, or simply create something that does what it does very well. Unfortunately, while the developer of *Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter* has tried its best to bring a new flavour to the genre, it's failed on both accounts.

Set hundreds of years in the future, the game predictably stars *Mace Griffin* – an ex-Special Ops officer-cum-bounty hunter who's out for revenge after serving a prison sentence for a crime he didn't commit. As you might expect, his adventure takes him across the galaxy, where all manner of predictable locations are loosely held together by the clichéd storyline. Aside from these unoriginal elements though, British developer Warthog has actually been fairly creative in terms of gameplay variation. The missions tend to be broken up into two key types – generic first-person corridor sections and space combat sections, the latter bearing more than just a passing resemblance to Sony's PSone hit, *Colony Wars*. Sadly, while these sections could quite easily have been used to encourage a certain amount of *Elite*-style space exploration, the opportunity has been wasted due to progression being an all too structured affair that's dictated by the linearity of each mission.

Of course, all could be forgiven if the core gameplay was solid, though even the first-person sections (which make up the vast majority of the game) fail to ignite any sort of intrigue or excitement in the player. The main problem is that everything is so predictable – there are simply no standout moments. Initial level structure has much in common with *Halo*, right the way down to the architecture and even the colour palette used, though it doesn't take too long to discover that underneath the promising surface gloss lies a surprisingly dull and uninspired gaming experience. Like every other FPS on the market, a number of different weapons are available – well, ten to be precise, including favourites such as the Shotgun. The problem is that while all the vital ingredients seem to have been included, there's very little to distinguish this from anything else.

To make matters worse, there are also numerous imperfections with the artificial intelligence, which we were once promised would

FAQs

Q. MULTIPLAYER?
Unfortunately not. Despite the fact that pretty much every other first-person shooter has some sort of multiplayer mode, the developer obviously thought it wasn't an important feature here.

Q. SPECIAL EFFECTS?
Mace Griffin looks very lovely for most of the time. However, when numerous effects are being processed at the same time, it tends to slow down and break up.

Q. IT LOOKS A BIT LIKE HALO, DOESN'T IT?
Yes. The developer has obviously used *Halo* as reference when creating *Mace Griffin*. Sadly, this is way behind Bungie's creation in every way.



The *Halo*-esque visuals can't disguise how shallow the gameplay is here.



The space combat sections of the game are similar to Sony's PSone game, *Colony Wars*.



FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

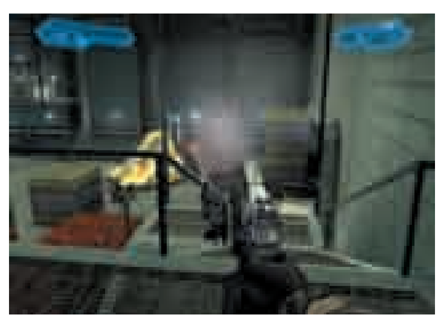
FPS: Half of *Mace Griffin* is a good-looking but generic corridor-based first-person shooter…

SPACE COMBAT: …While the other half involves flying around in outer space and shooting things.

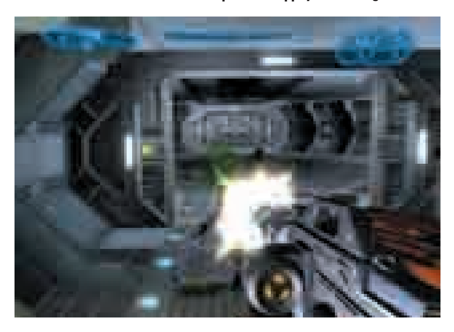
HOLLYWOOD CONNECTIONS

Continuing the trend for employing celebrities to voice videogame characters, *Mace Griffin* features Henry Rollins as the voice of Griffin himself. Famed as the front man of Black Flag and the Rollins Band, Rollins has recently become better known for his acting roles in films like *Johnny Mnemonic* and *Heat*. Hardly worthy of an Oscar, his performances so far have consisted mostly of supporting roles and cameos, so it perhaps isn't surprising that he was available for *Mace Griffin*. Even so, Vivendi's Philip O'Neil insists that Rollins was the right choice for the part, saying: "Vivendi Universal Games identified Rollins' voice and talents as perfectly in line with its vision for Mace and specifically targeted him for this role." Rollins follows the likes of Dennis Rodman who voiced Zack in *DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball* and Haley Joel Osment who voiced Sora in *Kingdom Hearts*.

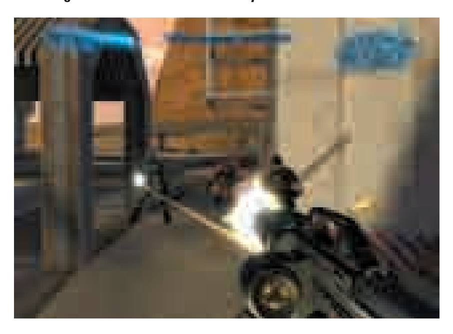
■ ABOVE: On occasions, *Mace Griffin* can be unnecessarily gory.



■ BELOW: Foes tend to be a bit stupid, and happily walk into gunfire.



■ The game can slow down when many enemies are on-screen.



be 'lifelike'. Unfortunately, despite a handful of moderately decent routines being implemented by the developer, it's not difficult to discover glitches that leave enemies temporarily unable to defend themselves. Foes running from one designated zone to another often won't attack while on the move, for example, while others are simply unable to figure out your whereabouts if you're not at ground level. By contrast, enemies will regularly target you with pinpoint accuracy the moment you enter the room, making the stealth approach nigh-on impossible. To make things even more infuriating, taking a hit causes a moment of motion blur, which looks nice enough, but usually results in complete disorientation for a few seconds, during which time further injuries are sustained.

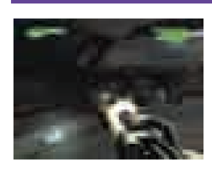
Aside from all these imperfections, *Mace Griffin* isn't terrible in every way – in fact, from a visual standpoint it's very competent. Textures are incredibly sharp and clean, and when combined with a range of dynamic lighting effects and the occasional layer of bump-mapping, scenes and settings are often extremely atmospheric. More impressive however, is the fact that Warthog has managed to maintain a 60-frames-per-second screen update for the most part, and while this doesn't really increase the overall quality of gameplay, it certainly adds a layer of polish.

At the end of the day, however, despite its impressive graphical effects, *Mace Griffin* needed a lot more polishing before being released. In its current state there simply aren't enough decent elements to make the game stand out from all the other FPSs on the market. With glitches in the artificial intelligence, generic level designs, too little space exploration and a completely unforgivable lack of a multiplayer mode, we can't help feeling that it's all been a bit of a wasted opportunity. With a tweak here and there and a slight rethink on the importance of the space combat sections, this really could have been something special. As it stands, it's already been eclipsed by titles that launched years ago.

VERDICT 4/10

WITH TIME, THIS COULD HAVE BEEN SOMETHING SPECIAL

GAMECUBE £39.99 SEPT '03

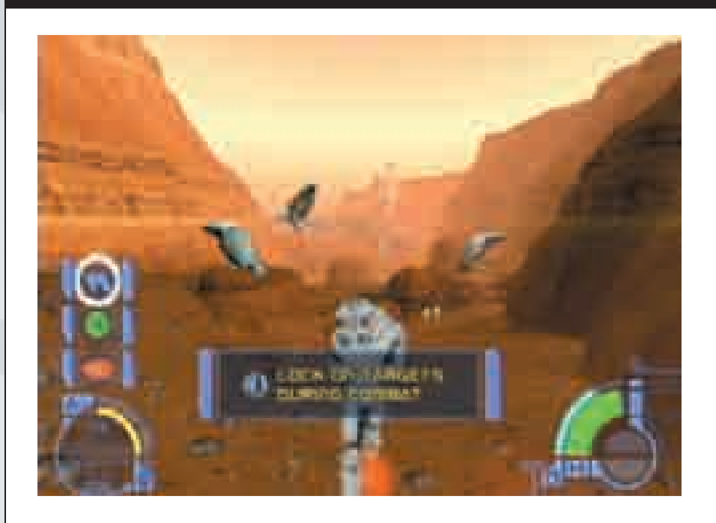


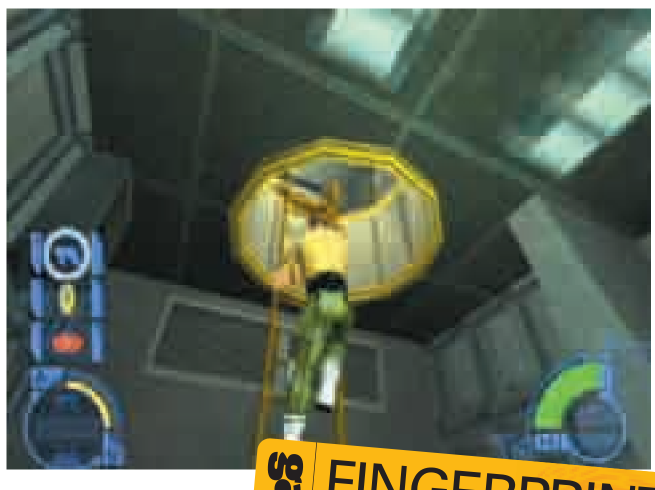
Although GameCube *Mace Griffin* isn't hugely different to the Xbox version, it loses a little sharpness and doesn't have that Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound.

PS2 £39.99 OUT NOW



Aside from suffering from slightly worse textures and a lack of 5.1 Dolby Digital, the PS2 game is essentially the same as the Xbox version. So this is just up to personal preference.





FINGERPRINT games™

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

BIONIC ARM: Wheeler's super-human capabilities sounded promising, but he's hardly versatile.

QUIRKY CHARACTERS: The cut-scenes are mostly great, though you can't skip through them.

IS LUCASARTS' LATEST A CASE OF ROCK ON OR SWITCH OFF?

RTX RED ROCK

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
LucasArts

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

The excessively long opening sequence at the beginning of *RTX Red Rock* suggests that the game itself is quirky and highly enjoyable. Featuring Wheeler (a biomechanically enhanced soldier), his curvy cyborg sidekick IRIS and a tongue-in-cheek script, the game fools you into believing that what you are about to play will be reminiscent of a classic LucasArts adventure title. Sadly, that couldn't be further from the truth.

From the off there are numerous problems. The camera is frustratingly close behind the character, and although it can be adjusted, it's nigh-on impossible to find a position that doesn't restrict the gameplay. The first level is incredibly claustrophobic and consists of a number of tiny rooms linked together by even smaller tunnels. Progression here is astonishingly linear but it's made unnecessarily difficult thanks to poor design, questionable collision detection and that duff camera. With virtually no indication of what to do, the gameplay consists mostly of searching for interactive elements by pressing the Action button, which is hardly engrossing.

Unfortunately, while the levels open out later on, many of the imperfections continue to cause problems. Much of the game revolves around leaping from platform to platform, and because of the choppy frame rate and general unresponsiveness of the controls, even the most straightforward jumps can take several attempts. Worse still, cycling through each of Wheeler's special abilities is a needlessly time-consuming process that can't hide the fact that progression is barely more in-depth than skimming through a level of *Crash Bandicoot*.

On top of all the gameplay issues, it's also worth noting just how uninspired *RTX Red Rock* looks. An atmospheric layer of smeary lens softening can't hide a selection of simplistic polygon models, bland textures and a garish colour palette. Frankly, we're amazed that a company as prolific as LucasArts continues to release such sub-par products.

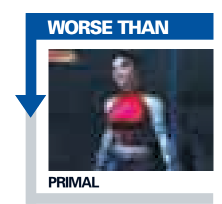
VERDICT 3/10
A FEW DECENT IDEAS, BUT SOME DIRE EXECUTION

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER



BETTER THAN

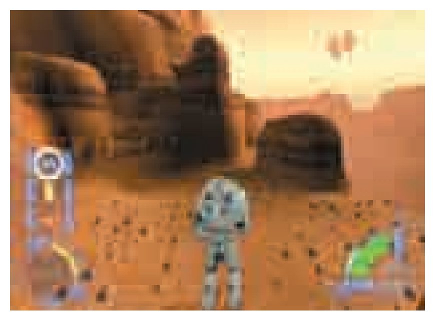
WORSE THAN



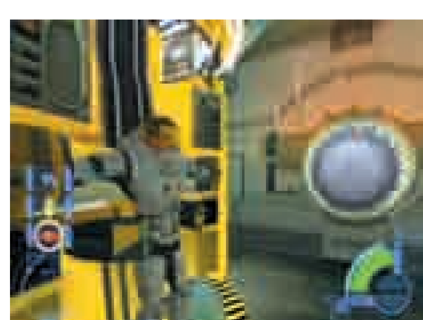
PRIMAL



While the exterior levels tend to be action-based, rigid puzzles result in the interior ones being far too linear.



The enormous rocky landscapes of Mars can't hide the fact that the level structure is virtually as simplistic as *Crash Bandicoot*.



Wheeler only wears his space suit outside, though jumping feels weightless with or without it.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
Treasure

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

VEXX

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

WARIO WORLD

BAD LUCK, WARIO – YOU AIN'T A-GONNA WIN THIS ONE

It's not often that you'll find us referring to a new game published by Nintendo as 'distinctly average'. In fact, while some recent titles haven't exactly been the be-all and end-all of greatness – such as *StarFox Adventures* or *Super Mario Sunshine* – the last title that we can remember thinking was 'distinctly average' was *Yoshi's Story* on the N64, some five years ago. But now that Wario fans have finally got their wish of seeing their favourite Nintendo character on the big screen, it looks like we can wipe the slate clean and start counting the days all over again.

You see, *Wario World* is pretty much a one-trick pony – or a four-trick pony if you want to actually do some counting. Mirroring the basic 'find the hidden treasure' gameplay offered by the previous GBA incarnation, the game covers four simple concepts on each level, all involving finding hidden items either in the main area or tucked away inside retro-style platform stages like the ones in *Super Mario Sunshine*. Combine this with a constant stream of re-spawning enemies to bash and you've got all the ingredients for a game that could get oh-so-repetitive, oh-so-quickly. And guess what? It does.

Despite being created by a third-party though (in this case, Treasure, the firm behind *Ikaruga*), there's no denying that *Wario World* manages to capture some of that elusive Nintendo magic that all its first-party games have. This, not surprisingly, is a good thing; overly-repetitive action aside, the game has a certain something that makes you want to keep playing and see everything it has to offer. Unfortunately though, that won't take you very long at all – not just because you're doing the same thing level after level, but because the game itself is so damn small. With only four worlds to explore (each consisting of two main levels and a boss stage – yes, it really is that tiny) even someone with just a small amount of ability will be watching the credits roll after only a couple of days' worth of play.

It's a shame, because for all its simplicity *Wario World* does have its merits. However, given that you'll either get fed up of doing the same tasks over and over or finish the whole thing not long before that happens, there's not enough here to prove anything more than a minor distraction.

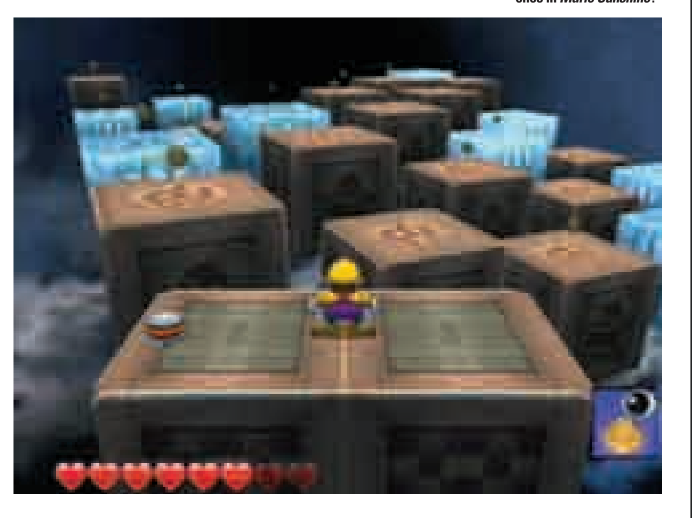
■ Some of the bosses are good, but it's just too damn easy. We completed the whole game (including finding everything) in a day. Blimey.

VERDICT 5/10
COMPELLING, BUT FAR TOO REPETITIVE AND SHORT

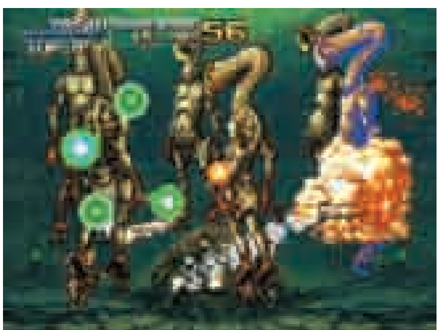
■ Could these old-school mini-games be any more like the ones in *Mario Sunshine*?

games™ CONNECTED
EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY
DEMO A-GO-GO: By collecting all the items and hidden treasure on a level, you'll unlock a pillar in the main hub. You can use these to download trial games from *WarioWare Inc* to your GBA.



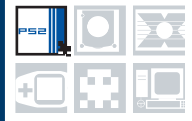








DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Playmore

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
¥6,800 (£34.99 approx)

RELEASE
TBA (Japan: Out Now, US: TBA)

PLAYERS
1-2

SNK'S ARCADE CLASSIC FINALLY COMES TO A NEXT-GEN CONSOLE

METAL SLUG 3

When SNK launched the first *Metal Slug* game back in 1996, the company had no idea just how successful the series would turn out to be – which wasn't really surprising considering that the core gameplay consisted of nothing more than walking and shooting. But thanks to its unique visuals, sublime animation and army combat theme, the game was an instant hit – so much so, in fact, that the limited number of Neo-Geo AES cartridges released soon sold out and have since become highly collectable. These days the game sells for more than £1,000, and copies rarely become available even at that price.

The game was translated to both PSone and SEGA Saturn, and although neither version was perfect, both were affordable at less than £40. Of course, so far only Neo-Geo AES owners and those lucky enough to live near specialist arcades have been able to enjoy the third instalment in the series as *Metal Slug 3* has never appeared on non-SNK hardware. Now, however, thanks to Playmore's recent acquisition of SNK's game licences, the title has arrived with numerous enhancements and additional gameplay modes on PlayStation2.

Although it's never going to be mass-market, the *Metal Slug* series and, more specifically, the PS2 translation of the third game, actually appeals to a far wider audience than the retro-style visuals might suggest. Resurrecting the quality and values of a title from yesteryear, the game features a cast of four colourful characters, each with a gun and a limited number of grenades. Fighting against angry wild animals and opposing human forces, the idea is simply to travel from A to B destroying foes, jumping gaps and avoiding literally thousands of bullets that fill the screen. Like many other SNK games (and other similar titles from rival developers, for that matter) *Metal Slug 3* is infuriatingly difficult. With so much going on, it's often all too easy to find yourself trapped in a corner, surrounded by bullets and with nowhere to go. Annoying as it is though, the game has that remarkable secret ingredient that keeps you coming back for more no matter how frustrating it

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY LEVELS?
Just five, but they're fairly long and there's plenty of variation

Q. HOW MANY CHARACTERS?
Four different characters are included, though there's really very little to distinguish one from another

Q. WHEN'S IT OUT HERE?
Now that SNK is up and running again we should hear something very soon. At the moment though, nothing has been confirmed.



Every level is jam-packed with action. Enemies attack thick and fast, even in the most unlikely places.



If you're unlucky enough to get turned into a zombie, any bombs you have are converted into death-dealing vomit.



SNK's impressive artistic design is way beyond the quality of most similar developers' work.

sometimes gets. Besides, those who play the game regularly will soon become aware of the most problematic places and prepare themselves accordingly. Of course, things are made easier on the PS2 due to the fact that infinite continues are available from the outset.

Aside from its addictive core gameplay, *Metal Slug 3* also deserves praise for its level of interaction with the scenery. Fans of the series will be aware of the huge number of 'vehicles' that can be driven in every one of the *Metal Slug* games, and this one is no different; from submarines to armed elephants, mech combat suits to camels, progression is certainly never boring. There's even a sci-fi level in which you're transformed into a zombie upon taking a hit, causing you to shuffle slowly along, vomiting blood whenever the secondary weapon button is pushed. This is brought to life with an astonishing number of animation frames – the characters even smoothly swap which hand they're holding the gun in each time you change direction. Even though *Metal Slug 3* was first released in arcades three years ago, the quality and amount of animation remains unmatched even now.

But the best thing about *Metal Slug 3* is that two players can enjoy the game simultaneously. Unlike most modern multiplayer games, both participants must work together in *Metal Slug 3* rather than fighting against one another. While some sections are all-out blast fests, others work well if both players plan their moves – one player may want to hold off incoming attacks, for example, while the other focuses all their attention on the main problem at hand. Although this is hardly a new feature, it's done particularly well here and helps to substantially increase the longevity.

It's fair to say that *Metal Slug 3* doesn't bring anything new to the world of videogames, though it does bring something back. With so many of today's releases offering more in the way of style than substance, it's refreshing to play a title that resurrects an era when the balance was perhaps as good as it's ever been. It isn't without its problems, of course – at times the game can be more than just a little unfair, while the inclusion of unlimited continues may well upset the hard-core fans. Even so, *Metal Slug 3* still manages to be one of the most entertaining PS2 games of the year. If you want a taste of the best of what retro gaming has to offer, or simply want an enjoyable two-player action game that you can enjoy with friends, you can't go far wrong with this.



VERDICT 8/10

A SUPERB TRANSLATION OF A NICHE GAME

BRINGING IT HOME

Authenticity to the original is a major factor in a translation such as this and we're happy to report that PS2 *Metal Slug 3* has everything and more. It's arcade perfect in every respect – even loading times, which are often a problematic area with the Sony console, are next to non-existent. Sprite quality and the all-important animation are every bit as good as their Neo-Geo predecessors too. But the nicest surprises are the new game modes that have been added for this conversion – Fat Island and UFO being particularly hard to find fault with. The former sees you rampaging around a single screen, killing enemies and devouring the food they leave in order to reach a designated weight (an absolute riot in multiplayer) while the latter puts you in control of one of three enemy soldiers in a bid to escape from an alien mothership using a single life. We may not be fans of ports in general, but when they're this well executed it's hard not to be impressed.

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

SO SMOOTH: The *Metal Slug* series has always been well known for its stunning animation.

CATCH A RIDE: A number of interactive vehicles are featured, including mech suits and submarines.

GUNSTAR HEROES



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



METAL SLUG



Outrunning this enormous boss isn't too tricky if you've got a mech suit.



These ugly chaps all need to be destroyed before the real boss appears.



IS THE LATEST INCARNATION OF THE HALF-LIFE ENGINE ITS FINEST HOUR YET?

DAY OF DEFEAT

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Activision

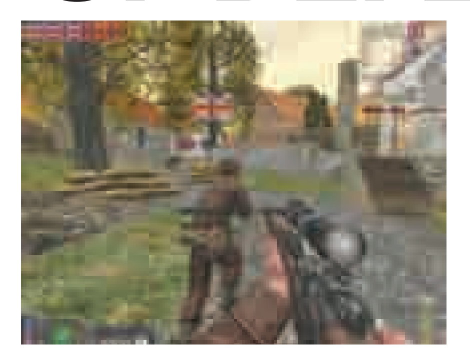
DEVELOPER
Valve

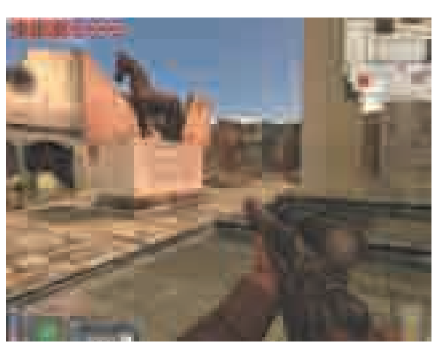
PRICE
£19.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
Up to 32 online

MINIMUM SPEC
450MHz processor, 64MB RAM, 535MB HDD space, 56KBps Modem







During the intense battles for territorial control the action will tend to congregate in key areas around the centre of the map.

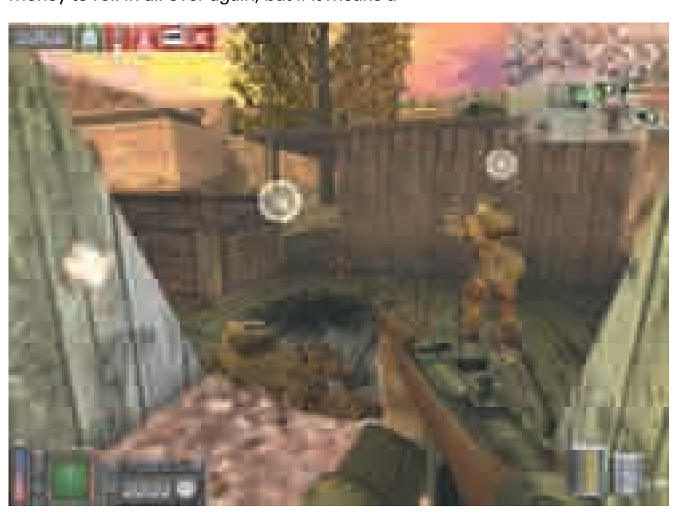
The more we see of developer Valve's masterpiece in the making, *Half-Life 2*, the more certain we become that the sequel to one of the most enduring first-person shooters ever devised will simply outclass everything in its wake. But don't think for a second that means the original *Half-Life* engine is ready to hand over its crown just yet – the old war horse still seems to have plenty of life left in it some five years after its initial release. The engine's proven formula remains the driving force behind *Counter-Strike*'s continuing dominance of the online arena and is ever popular with rookie programmers as the definitive FPS mod template.

One of the most successful mods to make use of the technology dressed player models in authentic World War 2 regalia and had teams of Axis and Allied soldiers battle it out around maps based on war-torn Europe in the 1940s. A massive hit with the online faithful, the idea of *Counter-Strike* being played out in the ultimate theatre of war proved too much of a potentially lucrative concept for publisher Activision to ignore. Before long, the *Day Of Defeat* mod had been taken back to Valve for some fine-tuning and a few coats of polish, then whacked onto retail shelves worldwide with a price tag of around 20 quid.

While the original mod file can still be downloaded for free and bolted onto any copy of *Half-Life* for some instant WW2 team-based action, turning *DOD* into a standalone retail package should be beneficial to more than just Valve's bank balance. Justified cynics can say what they will about simply putting a tried and tested engine into 1940s fancy dress and expecting the money to roll in all over again, but if it means a



Playing as either Tommy or the Hun, a strategic approach should run rings around a disorganised enemy.



Teamwork is the key to success so try to find a good bunch of online buddies willing to listen to each other.



FAQs

Q. DOWNLOAD OR BUY?
The retail version contains new maps, lots of polish and lets you play as the Brits.

Q. MISSION IMPOSSIBLE?
Don't be daunted by the expert sharpshooters out there, you'll soon be beating them at their own game.

Q. DO I NEED HALF-LIFE?
Not with the retail *DOD* – it's a standalone game that gives anyone access to the online party.

newcomer to the online gaming arena can pick it up for £19.99 and jump straight into one of the finest examples of the genre then we're all for it. Of particular interest to those casual gamers who are maybe a little behind in the ever-important hardware race, the ageing *Half-Life* engine allows *DOD* to run smoothly on a modest spec machine and through your standard 56k phone line connection. The engine does sadly show its age on the graphics front with some crude geometric shapes, blocky character models and indestructible scenery, yet still manages to deliver the quality gameplay experience that has kept *Counter-Strike* at the very top of its class. In fact, the *DOD* online experience more than holds its own against the visually superior likes of *Battlefield 1942* and *Medal Of Honour*, yet doesn't prevent those without a monster PC from enlisting for battle.

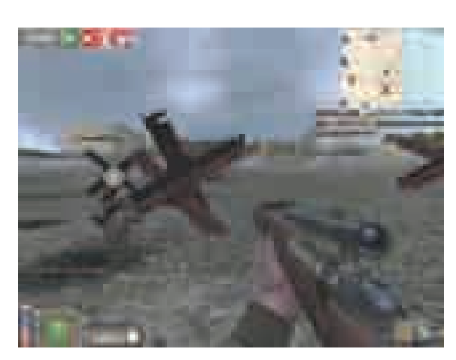
Players sign up for either the Axis or Allied cause and will find themselves thrust into the middle of a key historical conflict, circa 1944. There are nine new maps included in the retail version (taking the total to 15) split between the traditional territorial control scenarios and missions to capture or destroy certain objectives. These capture/destroy missions usually impose a time limit within which one team must successfully mount an attack on a specified position the other is tasked with ruthlessly defending, such as the obligatory re-enactment of the D-Day beach landings.

The British, American and German forces each have a range of soldier classes from which to select your character, providing players with a variety of attributes, weapons and consequent roles to undertake in battle. While each class of soldier is effective in different situations, the most appetising missions tend to be set on the streets of a battle-scarred town with particular opportunity for snipers to make themselves at home among the ruined buildings. Experienced players will no doubt have their favourite nooks and crannies in and around the superbly designed arenas, making life extremely difficult for first-timers. Sadly, newcomers into the fray must prepare themselves for a harsh lesson in the art of war as their initial few outings will inevitably be ended by a well-placed bullet to the head before they've even sighted an enemy soldier. To help prevent sniper camping, however, the camera will reveal the location of your assassin, forcing them to keep on the move or become a sitting duck for your revenge attack.

Whether you're on the end of some constant punishment, or the one picking off enemies left, right and centre around the battlefield, *DOD* irresistibly draws you back for more time and time again. The level designs shine above so many other team-based shooters and provide the perfect stage for some unbeatably tense shootouts. Although it may be lacking in cutting-edge visuals, has no single-player campaign to speak of and is essentially just another repackaged *Half-Life* mod, you'd be hard pressed to find a better designed theatre of online war.



VERDICT 8/10
THE TIMELESS HALF-LIFE ENGINE SOLDIERS ON…



Although battles among the narrow city streets tend to be where *Day Of Defeat* excels, a good variety of scenarios will keep players on their toes.



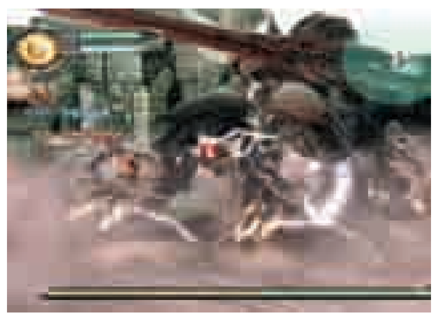
The maps are ripe with opportunity for the cunning sniper to find elevated positions for picking off unsuspecting infantry.

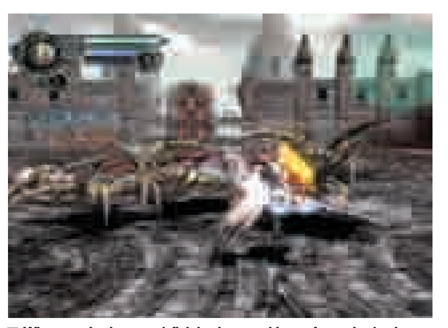
ALL FOR ONE…

While the random collection of hard-core experts and naïve beginners joining games on the public servers limits the likelihood of your team functioning as a unit, there is plenty to be gained from working together. Most maps offer multiple routes for your objective, and devising a considered tactical approach will have a disorganised group of enemy soldiers playing straight into your hands. A detailed map of the area can be marked with directions for your team to flank those pesky machine gun nests or avoid suspected sniper hotspots. Microphone compatibility is particularly effective for issuing swift voice commands to your buddies in the thick of the action, and helps to create a chillingly authentic atmosphere.




You'll often be fighting over ten enemies at once. How can you survive this? By hitting the Square button over and over again. Yawn.


The bosses are pretty big, but when defeating them just means slashing away repeatedly without a care… well, it hardly seems worth it.


When your Legions aren't fighting by your side you forget they're there, which kind of detracts from the game's 'novelty' value.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Capcom

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
¥6,800 (£34.99 approx)

RELEASE
TBA (Japan: Out Now, US: August '03)

PLAYERS
1

PLENTY OF CHAOS, BUT NOT MUCH ELSE…

CHAOS LEGION

While we always attempt to champion the cause of gameplay as much as humanly possible, our views don't often match those of die-hard enthusiasts – even though by our own standards, that's exactly what we are. Take our review of *P.N.03* in issue six, for example; those who read just the 6/10 score (rather than the whole review) said we obviously just didn't 'get it'. Fair enough – but if that's the case then we clearly don't 'get' *Chaos Legion* either. Why? Because we're sure that *Chaos Legion* is to free-roaming beat-'em-ups what *P.N.03* was to free-roaming shoot-'em-ups – furiously frantic, but ultimately disappointing and repetitive.

From a purely visual perspective, the game oozes the gothic flair for which *Devil May Cry* is famous, but the gameplay is rather similar as well (albeit in a cut-down form). Think of Dante's original sword-slashing adventure with the essence drained, then replaced with an army of freaky monsters and a single neat touch that can't stop the action becoming deathly mundane after a short period of time; that's *Chaos Legion* in a demon-encrusted nutshell.

However, it's the aforementioned 'neat touch' that makes *Chaos Legion* comparable with *P.N.03*. While *P.N.03*'s Vanessa Schneider had her Aegis Suits that had their own special moves and could be powered up by earning experience, so Sieg Wahrheit (*Chaos Legion*'s rather Dante-esque protagonist) has his Legions – monsters that can be summoned to fight alongside him who have their own special moves and can be powered up by earning experience. Coincidence? Perhaps. Of course, the fact that Sieg will often find himself greatly outnumbered means you'll be relying quite heavily on the Legions. However, as they're more useful when they're sent off fighting for you elsewhere, you probably won't even know they're there.

And that's the problem. With the game's one big trick failing to provide anything more than a mild distraction at best, the gameplay comes down to simply wading through endless waves of enemies by stabbing away at the Attack button… and that's it. What's more, the levels and the enemies all look the same. This, combined with the inanely repetitive gameplay, makes the whole experience feel utterly lifeless and flat. Even though we persevered through it, just a few short hours of play saw us wanting to never play the game again. In a title that demands repeated play to unlock all its secrets, that's just not on. Did we 'not get it'? Maybe, but we'll leave that for our critics to decide.

games™ FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
FOREIGN LEGION: Numerous Legion monsters mean you can customise Sieg's attack abilities.
POINTS MEAN PRIZES: Killing enemies earns experience points for improving your Legions.

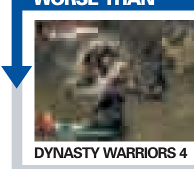
Use the right Legion at the right time – these long-distance ones allow you to attack without getting hurt.

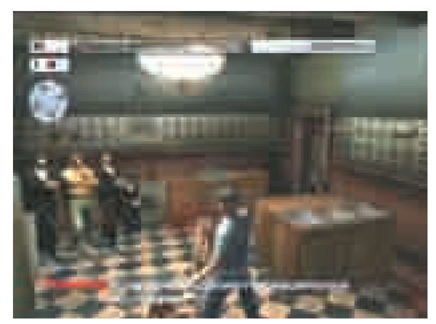



VERDICT 3/10
FAR TOO DISAPPOINTING FOR WORDS



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN




While some characters won't bat an eyelid at an unfamiliar delivery boy, let the kitchen staff get too close a look and you'll be in hot water.



With some of the most effective AI to date, the chameleonic assassin must tread with care to avoid arousing NPC suspicions.



Should your stealthy approach go pear-shaped, a formidable selection of heavy weaponry always provides you with a trusty back-up plan.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Eidos Interactive

DEVELOPER
IO Interactive

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

A REAL PROFESSIONAL'S WEAPON OF CHOICE IS SILENCE, NOT VIOLENCE

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em' is a mantra that might give Nintendo a much needed boost. A distinct lack of quality mature titles to sit alongside the Cube's famously niche brand of gaming has limited its ability to reach those lucrative segments of the market that have given its next-gen rivals the most success. But with ports such as *Splinter Cell* and *Hitman 2* finally making their way onto the Cube, do mature gamers still have an excuse not to buy Nintendo's machine?

In the latest stealth-'em-up to hit the console, players must take reluctant assassin Agent 47 out of retirement to undertake contract killings around the globe. Though you'll come across a comprehensive collection of weaponry, the accomplished hitman should be able to achieve his goal with only one bullet – or less. In fact, each mission can be completed without spilling the blood of anyone but your target, and skilfully avoiding conflict proves infinitely more rewarding than causing carnage. That said, players are sure to get their fair share of the fantastically smooth combat dynamics before developing the cunning and patience to navigate scenarios undetected.

Certainly the biggest draw of the game is the freeform approach you can take. The levels are designed to provide a host of opportunities and possible routes for the resourceful assassin to use. For instance, you're presented with a multitude of ways to infiltrate the home of your first target. Should you chloroform the postman, steal his uniform and try your luck at the front gate? Whack the delivery boy unloading round the back? Or would the guard relieving himself by the side entrance provide you with a better disguise?

The scope of this open-ended gameplay has never really been matched and gives the game endless replay value. The GameCube edition is a straight port of the original versions we're still playing nine months down the line, albeit with amendments to the content that caused offence to the Sikh community. Those willing to invest enough patience in the game are sure to be rewarded with one of the most fulfilling stealth experiences ever devised.

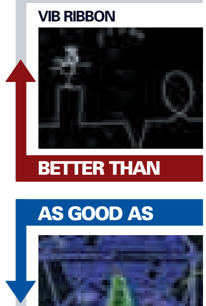
VERDICT 8/10
A WELCOME NEW STRING TO THE CUBE'S BOW





Playing back your created remix, you'll be able to add the icing yourself via the art of freestyle.

VIB RIBBON



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS

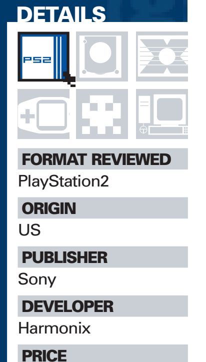


FREQUENCY

AMPLITUDE



DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Harmonix

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
TBC (US: Out Now)

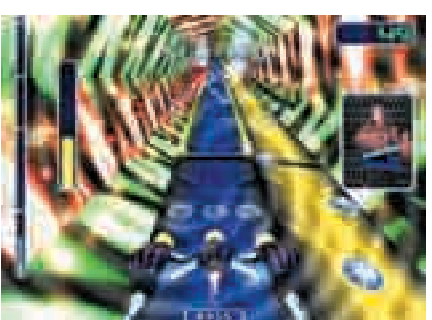
PLAYERS
1-4

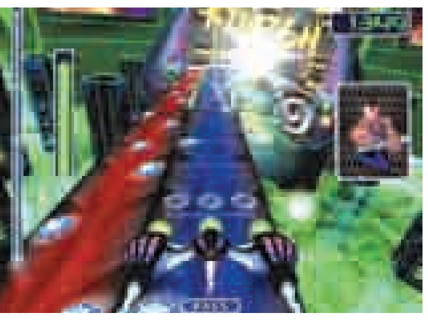
HOW DIFFICULT CAN IT BE TO TAP BUTTONS TO A RHYTHM?

Rhythm action titles are often known for their simplicity and last year's sleeper hit, *FreQuency*, is about as simple as they come. The game consists of little more than tapping three buttons in time with some on-screen prompts – the difficulty comes from the fact that the tunes are split into several tracks that must be activated individually. Why are we telling you this now? Because the concept for this sequel is one of the few aspects that hasn't changed a bit.

One of the most notable differences here is the wider musical spectrum covered by the game's 26 tracks. Gone is the emphasis on electronica, replaced with a far more eclectic mix of pop, rock,


The green arrows point out where to go next to keep your multiplier building. Obey the arrows.


The first game this year where slow motion is more than just clichéd eye candy? Probably.


If you've made it this far, you can probably count on clearing the stage. Or at least we'd hope so…

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY SONGS?
Twenty six in total, but some of the tougher ones are only available in the harder modes.

Q. MULTIPLAYER?
Both online and off, the selection of modes and options is simply superb.

Q. HOW HARD IS IT?
Difficulty varies from the insultingly simple to the impossibly tough, though the learning curve is excellent.

■ Songs are broken down into smaller sections (fewer and longer than *FreQuency*'s many sectors) and your life bar is boosted for clearing one.

games™ GLOBAL
TAKING GAMING ONLINE
VERSUS: Be it duels or full songs, the addictive online play is the best for PS2 so far.
TOGETHER: If competition doesn't do it for you, grab some friends and transform a song in Remix mode.

dance, jazz, metal, rap and more. This opens up the game to a wider audience and draws in fans of the featured artists – Weezer, Pink, David Bowie and Garbage are all mixed in with a selection of other 'name' artists and a few of Harmonix's own creations. The in-house music often surpasses the 'proper' tunes in terms of quality, but then it was created solely for inclusion in the game.

Perhaps the most common misconception about *Amplitude* is that switching the playfield from a tube to a plane was a mistake. It isn't – it brings an extra element of strategy to the proceedings as you'll now need to be much more careful with route planning and power-up use if you want to beat the tougher songs. This in mind, the new abilities give you a much better chance of bridging wider gaps if things do go wrong – Slo-Mo is the first acceptable use of slow motion in a videogame in months and the Freestyler puts the song on autopilot while you make with some virtual scratching. These items are as impressive as they are useful and the game retains a level of style that many high-profile titles would die for.

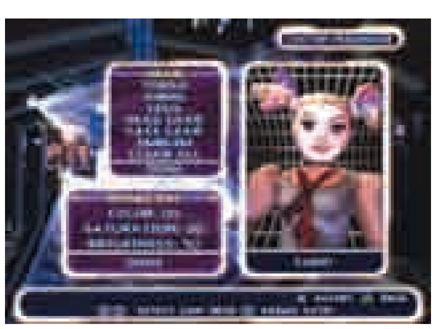
Amplitude doesn't just expect you to clear every song on every skill setting and be done with it either – in fact, we're not sure it expects you to clear the later stages of Insane mode at all. Once you've had your fill of being traumatised by a rhythmic pattern, you'll have the option to remix an existing track or take on a friend in one of three multiplayer modes. These take the form of remixing (see 'This Is The Remix'), multiplayer songs and, best of all, a 'duelling banjos' style face-off; one player lays down a pattern that the other must copy. Once again, these are a triumph of simplicity – anyone can pick it up but competition soon gets heated and before you know it, hours will have flown by.

We did stumble across a few flaws, however. These mainly concern online play, where there's a bug that can break up multipliers through no fault of the player. Admittedly, this is a rare occurrence and it seems everyone is susceptible so you won't be at a disadvantage. The online ranking system is also open to abuse – a player can climb the rankings by playing well but if a highly ranked player stops competing, they become very tough to overtake. Offline play is mercifully free of these drawbacks – the only real criticism of this is that it perhaps gives too much away too easily. While *FreQuency* locked entire sets of levels away on lower difficulties, *Amplitude* features a mere three songs that only exist on harder settings.

We don't expect *Amplitude* to fly off shelves or convert non-believers. This isn't the kind of music game that just entertains for a few hours before disappearing to the pre-owned bin; nor does it boast a quirky peripheral. No, *Amplitude* is something different – something so simple that develops into one of the biggest tasks of manual dexterity we've seen. Try it, learn it, love it and spread the word. But don't expect to finish Insane mode any time soon…



A SHINING EXAMPLE OF THE GENRE



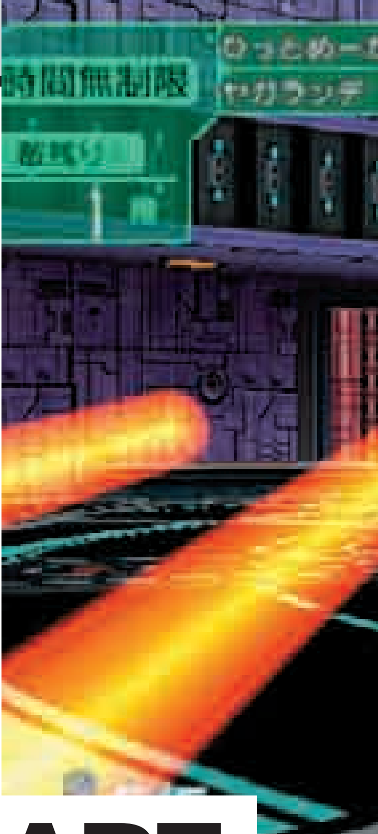
■ Your created Freq is now rendered in 3D – you'll unlock more parts as you progress through the game.

THIS IS THE REMIX

Even once you've got your nimble fingers around the hardest tunes, *Amplitude* has more tricks up its sleeve. As well as some excellent on- and offline multiplayer modes, the superb Remix mode allows up to four players to deconstruct and reassemble any of the game's songs. This is a lot more confusing than the main mode but with a little persistence and a few ideas it's possible to create some significantly different tunes. Better still, you can save your remix to a memory card, where it becomes another playable track. As if this weren't enough, the Online Remix Repository is full of other people's creations – downloading these is an excellent way to up the song count. Harmonix and Sony are keen to push this online aspect and are drafting in the big-name soundtrack bands to pick out the best reworkings and leave their feedback. Now that's after-sales service…







VIRTUAL ON MARZ

INCLUSIVITY OR INTEGRITY? HITMAKER MAKES A JUDGEMENT CALL…

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
SEGA

DEVELOPER
Hitmaker

PRICE
¥6,800 (£34.99 approx)

RELEASE
TBC (Japan: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-2

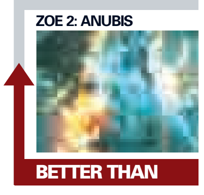
The year was 2001 and whilst it may have been full of greatness, it was also the year that Hitmaker released *Dennou Senki Virtual On Force* – the third incarnation in the *Virtual On* series that not only ran on multiple Hikaru boards, but was also four-player. Unfortunately, *Force* was by no means a great addition to the *Virtual On* saga. In a bid to make the game more inclusive, much of the combat intricacy and versatility was greatly toned down (or in some cases removed entirely) and it was very, very slow. In the past, each incarnation of *Virtual On* has received a console port, but with no SEGA console around at the time of the game's release, many wondered where *Force* would go.

Of course, it looks like that question has finally been answered with *Dennou Senki Virtual On Marz* for the PlayStation2. Despite the new name, *Marz* is, to all intents and purposes, a straight port of *Force*. Actually, scratch that – *Marz* is a straight port of *Force* but without the four-player element and no TwinStick peripheral. Oh, and the fact that *Marz*'s main focus is not that of human-versus-human combat, but the expansive Dramatic mode instead. The main game revolves around the player fighting for a Virtuaroid (or VR) battalion called Marz, hence the name of the game (so it's nothing to do with the planet Mars, as many previously thought). Missions vary from straight-up arena-based encounters to more complicated target-based objectives such as destroying gun emplacements or supply trucks. Set over seven episodes with multiple missions contained therein, it's fair to say that *Marz* is a sizeable game. It's also fair to say that it doesn't quite work.

You see, the unique game mechanics of *Virtual On* were meant for an enclosed space (or arena, if you will), focusing on combat between similarly equipped foes. *Marz* takes all that, bins it and then asks the player to do tasks for which *Virtual On*'s game mechanics aren't really designed. Having to traverse huge maps and explore areas does not suit an avatar that can only really dash around a locked-on target – it's clumsy and frustrating. Admittedly, some concessions have been made to make progress a bit more bearable. The advent of Repair Disks (a trumped-up name for health packs) allows the player to replenish health mid-mission, making some of the more extended sorties somewhat more manageable.

In addition to the Dramatic mode, *Marz* also plays host to Versus and Challenge modes, with the latter essentially being *Force*-lite, as you can play through some of the *Force* arena encounters. Sadly, Versus is something of a mixed bag – the maximum number of human players is two and the lack of decent split-screen options is rather disappointing. However, one of the more compelling aspects of *Marz* is the ability to unlock

ZOE 2: ANUBIS

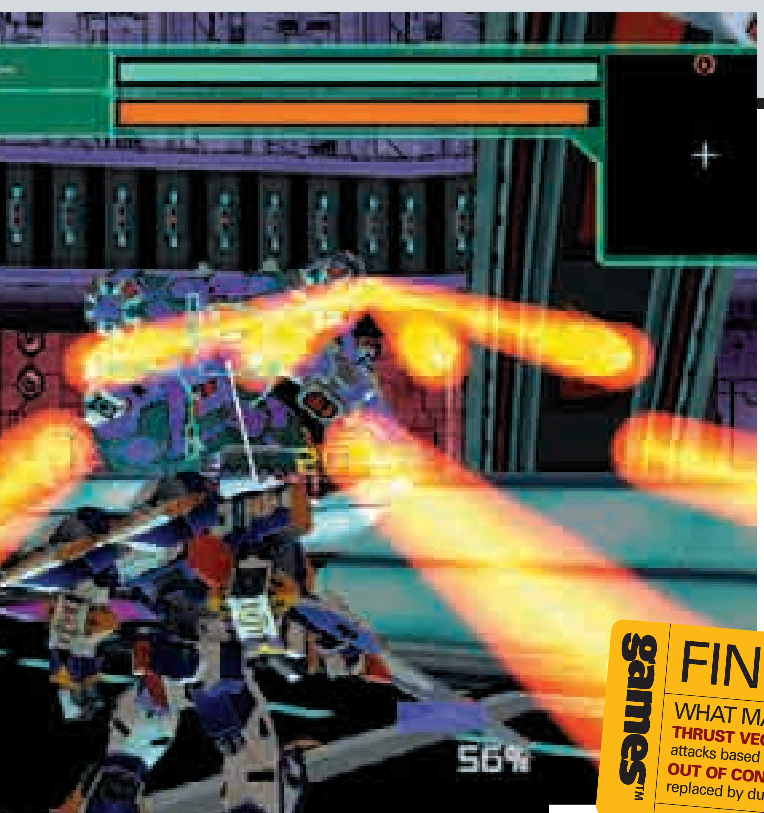


BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



VIRTUAL ON ORATORIO TANGRAM



FAQs

Q. ANY ILINK MODES?
Maybe. There are rumours that Hitmaker left an iLink option hidden in the game but sadly, we were unable to test this at review.

Q. ALL THE FORCE VRS?
Not all, but most. You can unlock them throughout the course of the game.

Q. WILL THERE BE ANY OTHER VIRTUAL ON ARCADE GAMES?
Yes – Hitmaker is working on one right now but, unsurprisingly, it won't give us any details at present.

STICK IT TO 'EM

One of the many criticisms levelled at the console ports of *Virtual On* was that you needed a dedicated peripheral to play them properly. Admittedly, this interface was only being faithfully transferred from the arcade originals, but many gamers felt excluded by having to fork out for a controller that no other game would use. However, *Marz* is the first console *Virtual On* title to buck this trend. Before you cry heresy, there is an emulated TwinStick set-up with the dual analog sticks. This works for the most part and is reminiscent of the old control interface; however, extended play can cause great discomfort. The old TwinSticks were big and expensive, but at least they were comfortable to use.



games™ FINGERPRINT

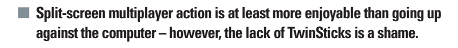
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

THRUST VECTORING: This creates homing dash attacks based around the vectors of each player.

OUT OF CONTROL: The TwinStick has been replaced by dual analog sticks (with mixed results).



Split-screen multiplayer action is at least more enjoyable than going up against the computer – however, the lack of TwinSticks is a shame.



Without wanting to put any stereotypes on it or anything, this clearly looks like a lady robot. One careful owner, complete with fluffy dice.

multiple playable VR's throughout the course of the game, which helps makes this a surprisingly compelling (if somewhat uninspiring) experience.

This isn't to say that *Marz* is an unmitigated disaster, because it's not. When actual combat kicks in, *Marz* is resolutely a member of the *Virtual On* fraternity – it's just getting there that can be a bit tedious. The one thing worth mentioning though, is that *Marz* is definitely aimed at people who haven't had much experience with the *Virtual On* series. Older players (or pilots, as we're reliably informed they call themselves), may feel very disappointed with what *Marz* has to offer in terms of actual game content. Of course, the shift to the PlayStation2 was no accident either; SEGA and Hitmaker want as many people to play *Virtual On* as feasibly possible. So where does this leave *Marz*? On the one hand *Virtual On*'s visceral combat mechanics are certainly present, but on the other they are forced to work across a selection of expansive missions and with a control interface that can cause physical discomfort. While this state of affairs is by no means ideal, the final game does remain slightly playable and strangely compulsive.

If you're someone who has never really been all that interested in *Virtual On*, then *Marz* is for you. If you're a long-time fan of the series, however, then suicide is probably the only option for you at this point. Whilst *Marz* has definitely been dumbed down for the masses, it should (in Japan, at least) make a wad of cash – we just hope that Hitmaker uses it to make a proper *Virtual On* game in the future.



VERDICT 6/10
VIRTUAL ON, BUT A LITTLE BIT OFF



Be prepared to sit through lots of robots shouting abuse at each other in Japanese – such is the way of things with mecha.

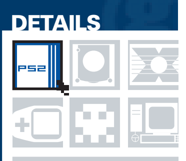


Taking on big sturdy robots in the great outdoors is all well and good, but without the confined arenas, it just doesn't feel right.

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4

YOU SAY DYNASTY WARRIORS, WE SAY DIE NASTY WARRIORS

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Koei

DEVELOPER
Omega Force

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

The long-running *Romance Of The Three Kingdoms* saga has to be one of the biggest sequel-spawning machines of all time. With the ninth instalment of the historical strategy yarn on the way, melee action spin-off *Dynasty Warriors* is also making another return to our consoles after selling over a million copies during its first month on release in Japan. For those still unfamiliar with the series, the action takes place in ancient China at the fall of the Han Dynasty. You take the role of an officer from any of the three divided kingdoms and are thrust into the epicentre of a massive battle scenario. The result is some of the best mass combat around, with literally hundreds of warriors clashing on the vast battlefields.

Perhaps the greatest draw of the *DW* series has to be your character's involvement in something so much bigger than the usual 'one hero versus the world' scenario. There's quite an element of strategy in freely roaming the battlefield, selecting how best to play a part in achieving your army's objective. Along with accommodating more on-screen soldiers than in previous outings, the AI has been refined to enhance the skills and strategies of your enemies. Your character will still be able to carve their way through regular infantry like warm butter, but becoming outnumbered or facing off against an enemy General tends to require a little more skill. Visually the fourth episode has been nicely polished, with some of the glitches of earlier versions being smoothed out. Backgrounds remain as lacklustre as ever though, and a limited draw distance still manages to plague the engine.

But apart from a beefed-up character count and a few minor gameplay additions, *DW4* has changed little in overall quality since the last chapter. The entire gameplay concept has always revolved around slashing and hacking your way through the ancient Chinese theatre of war, and once again Koei serves up more of the same with just a little more panache. Yet although the constant repetition of a fairly narrow gameplay idea may restrict *DW4* to a limited audience, there's more reason here than ever for intrigued newcomers to become engrossed in the saga. However, with an *Xtreme* upgrade due for an October release in the US, the wise warrior might just hold off a while…

VERDICT 7/10
MORE OF THE SAME WITH A DOSE OF POLISH

DYNASTY WARRIORS 3: XTREME LEGENDS



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS





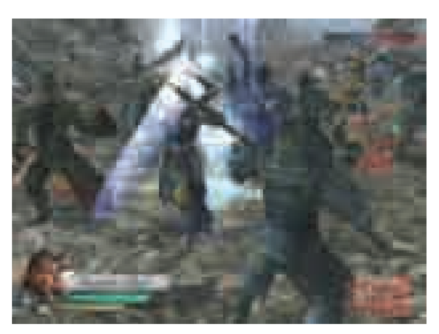
MYSTIC HEROES

games™

ENHANCED
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL
OUTSIDE, NOW: Challenge enemy Generals to a one-on-one duel while the battle rages around you.
FRESH FACES: Players can now take a different character into battle for each mission.



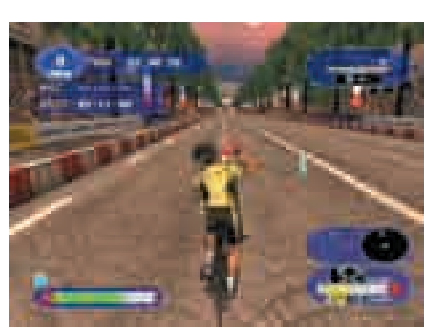
You can pretty much choose your own learning curve on the battlefield by proceeding with caution or diving straight into a regiment of enemy soldiers.



Players can opt to change character between missions, adding some variety to the fracas with their diverse weaponry and special moves.



The advanced AI allows you to sit back and watch your troops take care of the small fry while you hunt down the bigger fish.



Energy drinks will give your rider a boost when they need it most, and teammates may be called upon to replenish your supplies.



Fall during Career Mode and you'll need to rest or risk further injury.



Winning a cycle race is all about balancing your bursts of speed with time spent restoring stamina in the slipstream of other riders.

games™ ENHANCED

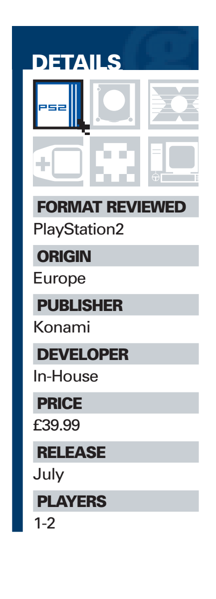
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

HELP ME: Have your teammates deliver energy drinks and create slipstreams when you need them.

NEW COURSES: Six new tracks bring you an even greater selection of mountain and road stages.

TRIUMPH IN THE WORLD'S MOST GRUELLING CYCLE RACE WITHOUT BREAKING A SWEAT

LE TOUR DE FRANCE: CENTENARY EDITION



DETAILS

PS2

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Europe

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
July

PLAYERS
1-2

To coincide with the pinnacle of last year's cycling calendar, Konami tried to bring all the joys of the Tour de France to the PS2, with limited success. Although the cycling simulator was an impressive effort to translate the sport into an entertaining videogame, some concepts simply don't work on consoles. So while cementing its position as yellow jersey-wearer of the cycling sim pack with this year's *Centenary Edition*, how far could Konami push the boundaries of the genre?

Once again the *Centenary Edition* is officially endorsed and features recognised teams and riders from the competition, along with tracks based on actual sections of the 2003 tour. Thankfully, the circuits have been compressed to capture the character of each section – races are long enough to employ tactics without the gruelling monotony of a marathon trek. The chess match of energy conservation involved in professional cycling is handled in such a way that newcomers shouldn't find too daunting, whilst giving hard-core fans a fairly complete simulation.

Pacing your rider during the race revolves around management of his Stamina Meter, which depletes the harder you push him. Energy drinks will instantly reinvigorate your cyclist, but since these are limited it's better to take advantage of the slipstreams created around your fellow riders. These air pockets are clearly shown and give your character a much-needed breather before putting in another burst of effort. Whilst this does add an extra element of strategy to the racing, in practice it all makes for a rather dull and quickly tiresome gaming concept.

The comprehensive Career mode is a commendable effort to combat the tedium of single races. Players start out as a young, poorly skilled rider and are faced with a long but absorbing journey through the ranks. Investing your prize money in equipment and training programmes, your goal is to attain a respectable position in the gruelling Tour at the end of each season. Konami deserves the utmost credit for trying to inject variety and strategy into the game, but overall the action is simply far too lifeless to amuse for long.



VERDICT 4/10

GREAT TRIMMINGS CAN'T RESCUE A DULL CONCEPT



LE TOUR DE FRANCE

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

MOTO GP 3


■ *Space Harrier* might be lacking a few graphical details in the bonus stages, but what did you expect, eh? Moon on a stick and all that…



■ It may look nice, but *Super Hang On*'s control makes it unplayable.



■ An arcade classic in the palm of your hand – perfect.

games™ FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
EASY TO PLAY: The simplistic nature of each game means anyone can become an instant expert.
NOT A SNES ORIGINAL: It may well be a port, but at least it's not another SNES title

SEGA ARCADE GALLERY



EVER WANTED TO PLAY OUT RUN ON THE TOILET?

Oh joy of joys, four of Yu Suzuki's finest arcade classics from yesteryear have been crammed into one amazing GBA cart. But have *Out Run, After Burner, Space Harrier* and *Super Hang On* managed to survive in a handheld world of little red tanks and the unassailable Mario?

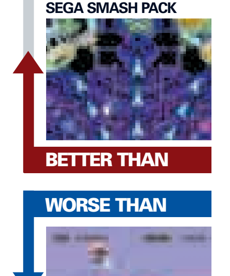
For those unable to pump coin after coin into the original machines, allow us to bring you up to speed – *Out Run* saw you behind the wheel of a gleaming Testarossa and was the first racer to give you multiple routes; *Space Harrier* was a frantic shooter; *After Burner* allowed you to take to the skies in a *Top Gun*-inspired jet while *Super Hang On* had you speeding through checkpoints on a high-powered motorcycle.

With all four games being graphical *tours de force* when they were first released, we were more than a little interested to see how they'd fare on our favourite handheld. Rest assured, Bits Studios has done an incredible job; each game runs at an impressively silky 60 frames per second and, bar a few graphical liberties (*After Burner* is now missing the canyons from its bonus stage, for example), the visuals are simply amazing. Audio is also a treat thanks to some extremely faithful renditions of all our favourite tunes (ah, Magical Sound Shower) and a decent array of spot effects that'll have you in retro heaven.

As striking as *Arcade Gallery* may look and sound, it's definitely lacking that all-important SEGA magic. Whilst the controls for *Out Run, After Burner* and *Space Harrier* are of a very high standard, *Super Hang On*'s are less so. Hit top speed and a simple press of the D-pad sees your bike slide uncontrollably across the road, meaning that getting around corners without crashing becomes a practically impossible task. *After Burner* and *Space Harrier* suffer slightly from the GBA's small screen, resulting in several quick deaths after failing to spot a bullet, but otherwise they all play exactly as you'd expect.

Our main concern was the ease with which these games can be completed. We raced through *Out Run* on our first turn and after ignoring the nigh-on unplayable *Super Hang On*, the remaining duo also fell within hours. Bits Studios' biggest oversight, however, was forgetting to include an all-important battery save (so racking up high scores becomes pointless) and leaving out a choice of difficulty levels. By all means rent it, but just don't expect to be playing this in a month's time.





THE HULK

THE NOT-SO-JOLLY GREEN GIANT PROVES ANYTHING CAN BE A WEAPON IN THE RIGHT HANDS

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, GC, PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Vivendi Universal

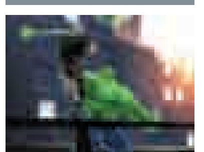
DEVELOPER
Radical Entertainment

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

XBOX, GC, PC
(£39.99 / PC £29.99)



The game's basic controls mean there's little to choose between platforms, and even playing the game with a PC keyboard works fine. The comic-book visuals are noticeably crisper on the Xbox and high resolution PCs, casting a more stylish aura over proceedings.

With the *Hulk* movie set to become one of this summer's action blockbusters, a multiformat game to accompany the adventures of everyone's favourite green behemoth was always going to be on the cards. But despite having such dubious origins as an obligatory movie tie-in, could the Hulk surpass his fellow Marvel stars and break the mould of gaming mediocrity?

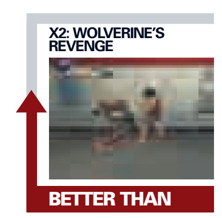
Whilst *Hulk* actor Eric Bana provides the voice for his videogame counterpart, as with *X2: Wolverine's Revenge* the action is based on the comic-book exploits of our superhero rather than his live-action outing. Visually the game achieves a balance somewhere between cel-shading and reality that manages to give a sophisticated feel to the cartoon action. Animation of the Hulk and his hordes of adversaries is smoothly captured, and players are relieved of camera control duties by some impressive automatic panning that never left us fighting out of a blind corner.

Our hero has a simple but effective repertoire of moves for dealing with the constant onslaught of enemies. Gameplay perfectly captures the Hulk's devastating power, almost causing your TV to shudder with each earth-shattering blow. Certainly the most satisfying aspect of the game comes from the interactive scenery that is reduced to rubble as the Hulk releases his aggression. A shocking amount of the environment can be totally destroyed, with even the sturdiest sections of wall or floor becoming damaged. Giant stone pillars crumble in the Hulk's wake, leaving huge chunks of masonry to be hurled at enemies. In fact, everything from forklift trucks to the hostile soldiers themselves can be used as projectiles.

Entertaining though this may be, moving from one basic combat scenario to the next soon becomes repetitive. In a miserably failed attempt to address this, the action is intercut with the occasional non-violent stealth mission. As Hulk alter ego Bruce Banner, players must avoid detection in a crude and frustrating version of the first *Metal Gear Solid*. Something extra was needed to make the impressive carnage into a wholesome game, but this definitely wasn't it. The novelty of bulldozing through the scenery with sheer brute force may wear off quickly, but more of the same would have been welcomed over such weak stealth content.

VERDICT 4/10
SATISFYING CARNAGE, BUT VERY LIMITED LIFESPAN

X2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE

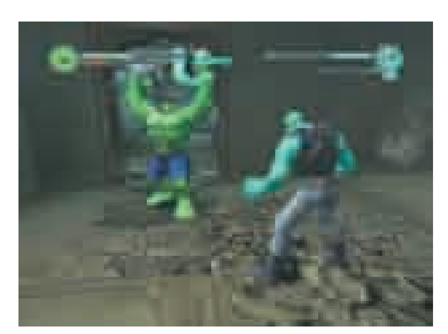


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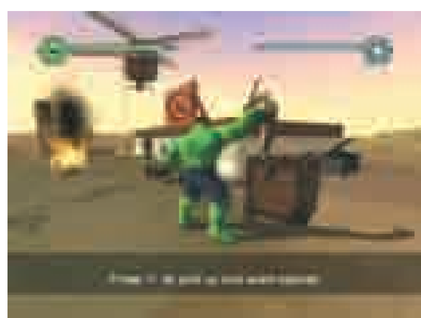
WORSE THAN



LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS



The game simply takes you from one dull environment to the next, filling each with slightly more challenging bad guys than before.



The Hulk puts a limited array of strikes and combos at your disposal, but the 'grab and hurl' manoeuvre has satisfaction guaranteed.



The most entertaining aspect of the game is the amount of devastation the Hulk is capable of causing; not least when he's got a car in his hands…

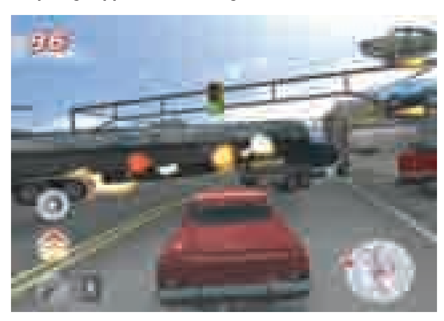
gamesTM FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
HUMAN BOWLING BALL: Grab the nearest enemy and hurl them into their advancing buddies.
PHYSICS CLASS: See some surprisingly realistic physics as scenery crumbles and barrels roll.



games™ FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
SUPERFLY GUY: Antonio Fargas (the original Huggy Bear) lends his vocal talents to the cut-scenes.
UNDERCOVER: Hidden extras include new cars and 'season special' mini-games.



Popping caps in asses is really rather fun in two-player mode, but try doing it by yourself and the magic is lost.



STARSKY & HUTCH

TIME TO PULL ON THAT CHUNKY-KNIT SWEATER AND BUST SOME PUNK ASS

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, GC, GBA, PC

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Empire Interactive

DEVELOPER
Minds Eye

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now (PS2, Xbox, PC), Sept (GC, GBA)

PLAYERS
1-2

Merely mentioning the golden era of TV action shows of the early Eighties is enough to create a warm glow of nostalgia as we recall the distinct odour of stilton that adorned everything from BA's catchphrases to Michael Knight's perm. So imagine our disappointment at the completely hashed attempts to capture the spirit of such priceless licences as *Knight Rider* and *The Dukes Of Hazzard* in recent videogames, raising doubts that any of our cult heroes would ever ride again outside UK Gold re-runs. But now British developer Minds Eye has delved even further back into the TV archives to try to resurrect the fortunes of Seventies cop series *Starsky & Hutch*, determined the well-loved duo weren't to suffer a similarly embarrassing fate.

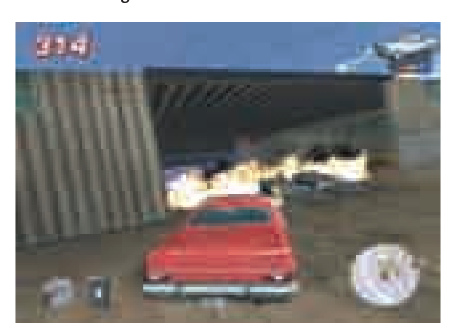
Rather than simply putting players behind the wheel of the famous Ford Gran Torino and relying wholly on the strength of the licence to do the rest, *Starsky & Hutch* actually endeavours to bring some interesting gameplay innovations to the basic chase-'em-up concept, which is certainly a laudable idea. In fact, although the car and characters might attract a reasonable fanbase to the title, the game itself is a much more general homage to the typically over-the-top car chases of the era rather than a faithful recreation of the TV series. In a further twist to help give proceedings a deliberately tongue-in-cheek flavour, the crime fighting duo have been transformed into retro-style cartoon characters akin to so many of their fellow Seventies icons such as the Jackson Five and the Harlem Globetrotters.

FAQs

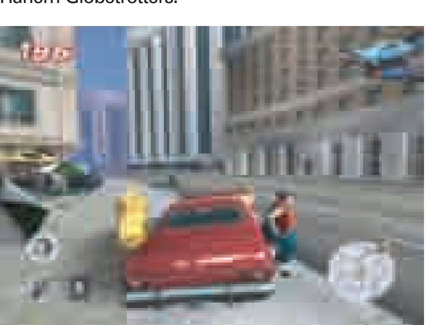
Q. BEFORE THE WATERSHED?
Your viewers will quickly turn off if they see you shooting or running over innocent passers by.

Q. HOW MUCH FOR THE GUN?
For the ultimate *S&H* experience, Sony's G-Con 2 will set you back around 20 notes.

Q. TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER?
Don't worry if the licence doesn't ring too many bells. You know how a car chase works, right?



The more exciting your stunts, the higher your viewing ratings.



Try not to hit pedestrians – you're a good cop, remember?



FINE LINE TO TREAD

The mighty *GTA: Vice City* emphatically restored our faith that the tongue-in-cheek essence of the Eighties could indeed be recreated in a videogame, and gave us high hopes that the humour-driven approach being taken on the *Starsky & Hutch* project would achieve a similarly atmospheric flavour of the Seventies. While not taking itself too seriously was the ideal strategy for this title, the fine line between a light-hearted style and plain old poor quality has been unsuccessfully trodden by *S&H*. The ultimate look and feel of the game falls well short of the mark with some horribly naïve execution that pales in comparison to so many other titles, and generally sets the standard for the lacklustre gameplay it depicts.

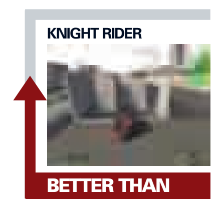
When a Special Event kicks off you just sit back and watch, which can get a bit dull after a while.





The cut-scenes might look superfly but the action in between is, er, wack?

KNIGHT RIDER



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS...



THE GETAWAY

The colourful cel-shaded cut-scenes link together a linear string of chase scenarios that typically have our heroes tearing through the streets of Bay City in hot pursuit of various villains. In an attempt to keep the action from deteriorating into just another repetitive high-speed driving romp, the novel Viewer Ratings score ensures players put as much effort into driving 'entertainingly' as they do into catching crooks. Your all-important viewers have tuned in to watch the Gran Torino smashing through all manner of conveniently stacked cardboard boxes and fruit carts, so failing to perform a spectacular stunt for long will have them switching over to watch *Crossroads*. End up with no viewers at all and the mission is over, effectively forcing players to keep the entertainment levels up for everyone's benefit.

Having Hutch lean out of the passenger side window and blast holes in your target's vehicle is the most obvious way to keep your audience glued to their screens, but Bay City is littered with other opportunities to boost ratings by jumping, skidding and generally causing motoring mayhem. Sadly, the most impressive stunts are performed by simply shooting or driving through a floating icon that triggers a Special Event for players to sit back and watch. This all feels far too scripted, and the lack of player involvement takes away any sense of achievement from pulling off these feats. Similarly scripted is your target's pre-determined route through the city, and the pressure of maintaining viewer ratings largely prevents players from doing anything but remaining firmly on their tail. The linearity of both the mission schedule and chase routes gives the feeling you're just been led by the hand through a series of rather lame set-pieces. While a separate free-roaming mode allows players to explore the city at their leisure, this could perhaps have been incorporated between missions *à la GTA* to give Bay City a more wholesome feel.

The much-hyped option to combine both steering wheel and lightgun controllers and re-enact the whole buddy cop scenario with a willing sidekick is another of *S&H*'s more inventive concepts. The otherwise uninspiring gameplay is given a welcome boost – particularly if you're in charge of firearm duties – and actually makes for a decent arcade-style experience. Take the gun away, however, and the game is crippled by an awful auto-targeting system it clearly wasn't designed to support. Single players will soon discover the icons they wish to shoot aren't necessarily in the direction they want to steer, leading to some ludicrous control conflicts. Effectively rendering the shooting aspect of the game pointless, as you can do little but fire continuously in the direction the car faces and let auto-target do all the work, the multiplayer ability to pick off icons and enemies anywhere on the screen is all but lost.

Such heavy reliance on the need for a steering wheel, a G-Con 2 *and* an enthusiastic mate just to get some excitement going proves to be the unravelling of Starksy's woolly cardigan. Unless you're lucky enough to have all three to hand all of the time, this will start gathering dust on the shelf almost immediately.

VERDICT 3/10

STARSKY IS NOTHING WITHOUT HUTCH AT HIS SIDE



Burning up his fuel, up here alone **Rocket Knight Adventures Mega Drive [Konami] 1993**




eMag



A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.8 JULY 2003
00p
RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION
CONSOLE OF THE MONTH
SEGA SATURN
ZOMBIES!
Join Retro for an adventure as we climb the Survival Horror game family tree
JUMPING FLASH
One of the PlayStation's most original launch titles remembered!
THIS MONTH IN 1985
We go back in time to the days of Marty McFly and synth pop!
WHY DON'T THEY REMAKE?
NiGHTS on the Saturn was a dream game!
WOW!
• JON RITMAN AND BERNIE DRUMMOND! THE MATCH DAY TEAM ARE BACK!
• PLUS RETRO BUYER'S GUIDE
Details inside this issue!
SONIC We take a look at games that never made it – this month, Sonic & Crackers!
SNK The arcade conversion kings – interviewed!
PLUS! Classic game ads!

RETRO NEWS

FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE HERE AND NOW OF RETRO GAMING…

It might seem strange that the SEGA Saturn continues to be more popular with collectors than the PSone. Of course, when you think of the number of decent Saturn games launched in Japan that were never released anywhere else and subsequently became extremely rare, it's easy to see how anyone into picking up obscure trinkets could be attracted.

The question now is which of the current consoles will have the most collectable games in the future. In the past, the most sought-after titles have often been those on systems that do well in Japan, yet with regard to the current generation, Capcom's impressive Xbox package *Steel Battalion* has been the most money-spinning title so far, selling for inflated prices on eBay from day one.

But with more obscure titles on offer than either of its competitors, it's the PlayStation2 that currently has the most potential collectors' items. Maybe we'll see a PS2 on *Bargain Hunt* in 30 years or so…



Keith Edwards, Retro Editor

INTELLIVISION DIRECT TO TV

CLASSIC GAMES FOR A BUDGET PRICE

Techno Source Ltd. has revealed its plans to release two Intellivision Direct To TV packs around the world, starting with key European territories this summer. Each unit comes in the form of a joypad that plugs directly into the composite ports on the front of your TV, and requires four AA batteries to run. Similar to DC Studios' Atari TV Game, which featured ten classic Atari 2600 games and launched back in February, the two Intellivision packs will come complete with the games built-in, so all you have to do is plug and play. Well, once you've bought some batteries, that is.

The only downside is that some games have been adjusted slightly in order for them to work properly, though the developer has assured us that its programmers have been working with the original source code to ensure that things are as authentic as they possibly can be.

Although no prices have been confirmed in Europe, it's expected that the two units – one which comes with 10 games and the other with 25 – will be priced at a paltry $14.99 (£8.99) and $24.99 (£14.99) respectively.

INTELLIVISION 25 GAMES

Astrosmash	Snafu
Baseball	Space Armada
Basketball	Space Battle
Buzz Bombers	Space Hawk
Football	Star Strike
Golf	Sub Hunt
Hockey	Thin Ice
Hover Force	Thunder Castle
Motocross	Tower Of Doom
Night Stalker	Vectron
Pinball	Volleyball
Shark! Shark!	Wrestling
Skiing	

INTELLIVISION 10 GAMES

Astrosmash	Shark! Shark!
Baseball	Skiing
Football	Snafu
Motocross	Space Amada
Night Stalker	Star Strike



▲ Old games, new joypad – the perfect combination? Now you can find out for yourself.

30 FIGHTERS FOR SVC CHAOS?



SNK'S LIST OF CHARACTERS JUST KEEPS GETTING LONGER AND LONGER…

Last month we brought you the news that SNK was working on a brand new one-on-one beat-'em-up called *SNK Vs. Capcom Chaos*. Well, since the initial unveiling SNK has continued to announce further characters, taking the total up to 24. And if the word on the street is anything to go by you can expect at least a further six to be included in the finished game, though whether these will be selectable from the outset or are secret characters that are unlocked later has yet to be confirmed.

CHAOS CHARACTERS

SNK Characters Confirmed

Kyo Kusanagi	Shiki
Iori Yagami	Choi Bounge
Mai Shiranui	Mr. Karate
Earthquake	Kasumi Todoh
Terry Bogard	Kim
Ryo Sakazaki	Genjyuro Kibagami

SNK Characters Rumoured

Geese Howardi
Bosou Iori
Shin Mr. Karate

Capcom Characters Confirmed

Ryu	Akuma
Ken	Dhalsim
Chun-Li	Vega
Hugo	Balrog
Guile	Sagat
Tessa	M. Bison

Capcom Characters Rumoured

Demitri
Orochi Ken
Shin Akuma





Shoulder pads, leg warmers and rouge were positively thriving 18 years ago. But aside from all the New Romantic frippery, July 1985 was also the month that *Back To The Future* launched in American cinemas. Okay, so we've ditched the eyeliner and polka dots, but Marty McFly's time-travelling adventures still keep us amused.

MEMORABLE MOVIES IN 1985 (AMERICA)

1: *Back To The Future* – Grossed $210,609,762
2: *The Goonies* – Grossed $61,400,000
3: *Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment* – Grossed $55,500,000
4: *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* – Grossed $40,900,000
5: *Ghoulies* – Grossed $35,000,000
6: *Nightmare On Elm Street Part 2* – Grossed $30,000,000
7: *Desperately Seeking Susan* – Grossed $27,400,000
8: *Weird Science* – Grossed $23,834,000
9: *Red Sonja* – Grossed $13,400,000
10: *Return To Oz* – Grossed N/A

UK CHARTS FOR JULY 1985

1: Frankie
Sister Sledge
2: Axel F
Harold Faltermeyer
3: Crazy For You
Madonna
4: Cherish
Kool & The Gang
5: I'm On Fire/Born In The U.S.A.
Bruce Springsteen
6: There Must Be An Angel (Playing With My Heart)
Eurythmics
7: My Toot Toot
Denise La Salle
8: Ben
Marti Webb
9: Johnny Come Home
Fine Young Cannibals
10: Live Is Life
Opus

WORLD NEWS

BOB GELDOF GOES LIVE

On 13 July 1985, the world contributed £30 million to charity as the biggest ever rock festival, Live Aid, was held simultaneously in Wembley Stadium, London, and the JFK Stadium in Philadelphia. Organised by Bob Geldof in an effort to raise money for the victims of famine in Africa, the event was televised in 160 countries and viewed by over 1.5 billion people. With performances from Status Quo, David Bowie, Wham and Dire Straits, it lasted for 16 hours and was initially expected to raise around £10 million. However, the calibre of the performers and some harrowing images from famine-hit Ethiopia attracted more attention than anyone could have imagined and the donations continued to flood in throughout the night. The biggest donation was from the ruling family in Dubai who contributed a whopping £1 million.


▲ "Send us your fockin' money," said Bob. So we did.

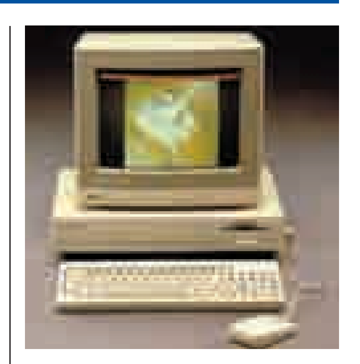
GAMING NEWS JULY 85

The First Commodore Amiga Launches

Although the Amiga is widely seen as a gaming platform, this successful series of home computers was initially aimed at the office when Commodore launched the first model in America in July '85. Designed by Jay Miner (the man responsible for the Atari 800, which had launched in 1979), the system was based on an earlier Amiga model called Lorraine.

However, Lorraine had been geared very much towards playing videogames, while the Amiga (which would later become known as the Amiga 1000 once other Amiga models were released) was more suited to the professional – a direction that Commodore had decided upon when it acquired Amiga (the company) in August 1984. As such, the format featured many upgradeable elements and went on sale at a hefty $1,295 (£790 in 'new' money).

Aside from its high price, the main problem Commodore faced when launching its powerful new system came in the form of Atari, which itself had been in the running to buy Amiga in 1984. Having lost out to Commodore, Atari had hurriedly put together its own, more affordable, system, the Atari 520ST, which used relatively inexpensive off-the-shelf components. Launched in January 1985 at $799 (£490 today), the 520ST had an ample head start over the Amiga 1000, and despite being slightly less powerful managed to retain its lead for two years.



Another consequence of the strong competition from Atari was that Commodore had been pressured into bringing forward the release date of the Amiga, resulting in Workbench 1.1 (the Amiga operating system) being littered with bugs that would regularly crash the system. Of course, such problems were later rectified, but it wasn't until 1987 and the launch of the more affordable (though less powerful) Amiga 500 that Commodore was able to compete with Atari. Interestingly, the 500 was more suited to playing games and, seeing as the Amiga brand name wasn't well known in Europe, was even marketed as a descendent of the C64, rather than an entirely new machine.

Retro

THIS MONTH'S FAVOURITES

These are just a few of the retro titles that have been stealing countless hours from our high-flying, high-powered schedules…

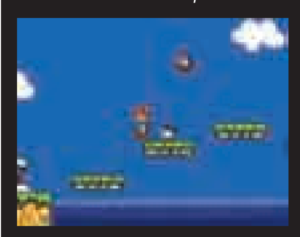
POWER STONE 2

This was one of our most played games when it launched on the Dreamcast in 2000. The single-player game wasn't great, but as a multiplayer *Power Stone 2* is unsurpassed.



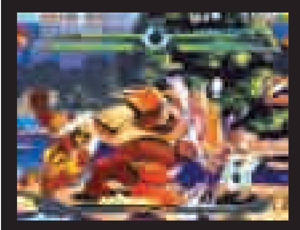
PSYCHO FOX

Few played this on its release, but it remains popular with its fans. Released on the Master System, SEGA later updated it for the Mega Drive in the form of *DecapAttack*.



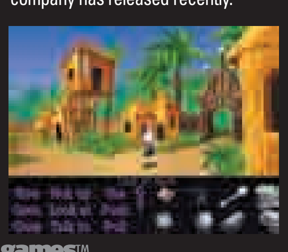
X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER

Being the first in Capcom's *Vs.* series, you'd expect *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter* to be showing its age six years after its arcade release. On the contrary, it remains as fresh and vibrant as ever.



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

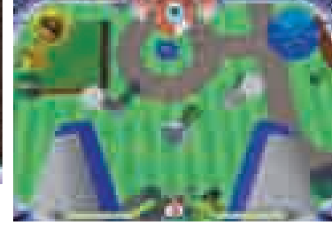
It's strange to think that this was a LucasArts game – especially when you look at the lacklustre titles the company has released recently.







▲ Being a rabbit, Robbit loved to jump. As a robotic rabbit, he could jump even higher.



GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT…

JUMPING FLASH!

Considering Sony's PSone platformer Jumping Flash! was released just eight years ago, it's strange that most gamers have forgotten it already. Similar in structure to Nintendo's *Metroid Prime*, the game smoothly blended platform elements with first-person shooting, resulting in a bizarre fusion that was quite unlike anything else.

The game starred a giant robotic rabbit called Robbit, and while such a strange creature may seem a little uninspired, his humorous HUD display, cockpit and jetpacks made for a rather charming central character. Of course, being fitted with jetpacks Robbit was able to leap high into the air, and this allowed developers to create worlds that were as high as they were wide. Aside from the odd corridor-based level, each location was staged on an enormous floating island, featuring myriad platforms hovering above and around it. The objective was simply to locate three Jetpods (otherwise known as carrots) that were placed in obscure and difficult places, then get to the exit within the time limit without being killed.

Thankfully, *Jumping Flash!* was an absolute joy to play, despite Robbit being potentially difficult to control. Jumping was broken down into three separate movements which made it easy to negotiate different-sized gaps. Pressing X once would result in a small hop that could only really be used to stomp on the heads of foes or to go up steps, but by pressing the button again whilst in the air, Robbit would boost roughly the same distance again then tip forward so that his shadow could be used as a guide for a pixel-perfect landing. Pressing X a third time would result in a final boost, making even the most distant platforms reachable.

Released on the same day as *Rapid Reload* (another of Sony's ill-fated first-generation PSone titles), this game was one of the few truly innovative titles available for the machine – even now it remains unique in its concept and realisation. Well, we say unique, but there were two sequels – *Jumping Flash! 2* and the Japanese-only release, *Robbit Mon Dieu*, which was developed by Sugar & Rockets, rather than Exact, which had been responsible for the first two games. In a slight change of direction, *Robbit Mon Dieu* was broken down into missions, meaning that each area could be used multiple times to increase the longevity.

So what happened to *Jumping Flash!* and why haven't other developers released similar titles? Well, apparently a brand new Robbit game was supposed to be in the works for PS2 prior to the machine's release, but as we still haven't seen it, it's probably been cancelled. Oh well, we'll always have the memories…

Presentation	80%
Graphics	88%
Playability	85%
Longevity	60%
OVERALL	80%



▲ Vertigo sufferers may prefer to give *Jumping Flash!* a wide berth – some levels were as high as they were wide.

DR. ROBOTNIK

If you try to remember your favourite game boss of all time, the chances are you'll start reminiscing about the visually impressive ones, or the ones that used diverse or perplexing attack patterns. It's easy to forget that sometimes game bosses can be great purely on the strength of their character design and the crushingly inept evil-doing they get up to.

Just look at Wile E. Coyote from the *Road Runner* cartoons – he's a typical baddy, but memorable for his bizarre contraptions with which he attempts to catch the Road Runner – contraptions that usually backfire and result in him being squashed by boulders, frazzled by lightning or falling hundreds of metres off a cliff, only to leave a coyote-shaped hole in the rock below.

Dr. Ivo Robotnik is probably one of the most infamous game bosses, and one who, like Wile E. Coyote, is remembered purely because of his vivid design and ingenious yet fruitless evil plans. In the very first *Sonic The Hedgehog* game it was written of how this mad scientist was snatching innocent animals and turning them into evil robots – something that he has continued to do throughout the entire *Sonic* series.

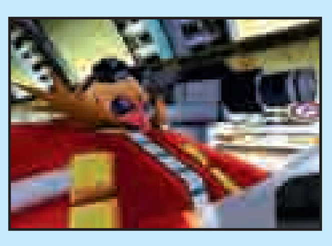
But you have to ask why. Was it going to make him more powerful somehow?

And how does he fund his evil empire anyway? He must have a vast stash of readies to afford all that high-tech equipment. And just what sort of a doctor is he? An evil one, that's for sure, but does he specialise?

Of course, as a fictional cartoon character, such questions need never be asked. Muppet-man Jim Henson once pointed out that the great thing about fictional characters is that they can be 100 per cent evil if their creator wishes them to be, and that certainly seems to be the case with Dr. Robotnik. With his huge, bloated body, spaghetti legs and bushy moustache, he's definitely the sort of person your mother used to warn you about.



▲ Dr Robotnik attended the same Evil Medical School as Dr Evil, Dr No and Dr Crippen. FACT.



▼ The wrecking ball was great for destroying hedgehogs but it made the spaceship a bugger to park.



SONIC TEAM AND EGGS

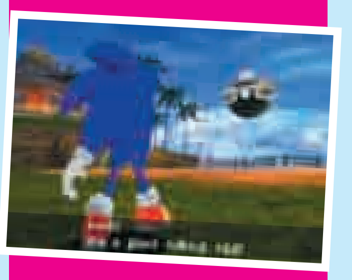
While looking at Sonic Adventure and Sonic Team's other games, it occurred to us that much of the team's work revolves around the egg. Sonic featured Eggman and Chaos eggs, the Nightopians in NiGHTS hatched from eggs, and now of course there's Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg. But where did this fixation come from, and what does it mean? Answers on a postcard please…

DON'T GO CHANGING

DR. ROBOTNIK

He may be called Dr. Robotnik round here, but in Japan Sonic's arch-enemy has always been known as Eggman because of his portly figure. This didn't cause a problem in the Mega Drive games – neither name was ever really featured, other than in the manual. However, when SEGA finally moved the series into 3D on the Dreamcast, each level was broken up with story-telling cut-scenes that regularly referred to Eggman and his spaceship, the Egg Carrier. Rather than going through the arduous task of recreating all the egg-related names and fonts, Sonic Team had a cunning plan…

Sonic and Tails first meet Dr. Robotnik in Mystic Ruins where he proceeds to inform them of his evil plan take over Station Square with the help of his latest creation, Chaos. As he confronts the two heroes, Sonic comments on how Robotnik looks like a giant egg, and continues to mock him by calling him Eggman. For the rest of the game, all the characters refer to him as Eggman rather than Dr. Robotnik, meaning that none of the text or egg designs needed to be changed for the Western release.



▶ Robotnik's habitual salad dodging led to cruel taunts…

LAST MONTH'S ATARI 2600 VCS SCREENSHOTS

Memory not what it used to be? Don't worry, here's the complete list of last month's retro screenshots…

FIRST ROW	SECOND ROW	THIRD ROW	FOURTH ROW	FIFTH ROW	SIXTH ROW	SEVENTH ROW	EIGHTH ROW
Super Football	Base Attack	Submarine Commander	Karate	Flash Gordon	Popeye	Bowling	River Raid
Kung Fu Master	Wall Ball	Kaboom	Vanguard	Donkey Kong	Joust	Road Runner	Xenophobe
Commando	Klax	Double Dragon	Superman	Arcade Golf	Wizard	Beamrider	Mouse Trap
Skateboardin'	Bachelor Party	Track And Field	BMX Air Master	Trick Shot	Eggomania	Golf	Saboteur
Grand Prix	Summer Games	Fishing Derby	Taz	ET	Gremlins	Night Driver	Stuntman
Spider-Man	Boxing	Super Cobra	A-Team	Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back	X-Man	Frogger	Star Fox
Ikari Warriors	Bermuda Triangle	Space Shuttle	Mario Bros.	Berzerk	Crazy Climber	Zaxxon	Pac-Man
Sorceror's Apprentice	He-Man	Super Ferrari	California Games	Time Pilot	Krull	Seaquest	Chopper Command
Burger Time	Galaxian	Beany Bopper	Tennis	Zoo Fun	Astroblast	Star Gunner	Pole Position
UFO Patrol	Pitfall	Spy Hunter	Defender	Tetris	Gauntlet	Robin Hood	Decathlon

A PRINCE AM

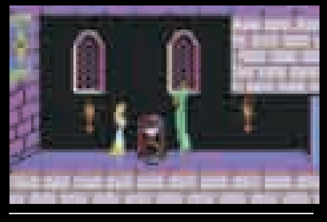
IT'S ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR AND ENDURING VIDEOGAMES, SO WHAT'S THE SECRET OF THE PRINCE OF PERSIA?

The detailed visuals enhanced the game's scenery, which wonderfully re-created an *Arabian Nights*-style palace.

Briskly rubbing your recently chained wrists and ankles, you gingerly step from your mouldy cell. Realising that the way ahead is clear, you race across the cold stone floor in an effort to escape imprisonment and save your princess from the clutches of an evil Vizier. So begins *Prince Of Persia*, arguably one of the greatest platformers of the late Eighties and still a classic 14 years on.

Like many early games, the majority of *Prince Of Persia* was mostly down to the efforts of one man, 25-year-old Jordan Mechner. Sure, his father composed the original music and his brother was the motion capture actor for the Prince, but this was Mechner's labour of love and after four long years *Prince Of Persia* was finally finished.

After the success of *Karateka*, Mechner headed to California to start work on his next title. Having used feudal Japan for his first game's setting he decided on something just



▲ Once the Vizier set the timer going you only had an hour to save the Princess. Against the clock!



▲ As you got nearer to the Princess, the guards you faced got harder to beat.

FROM TINY ACORNS

Although he had created many unpublished games, it wasn't until the release of *Karateka* that Jordan Mechner was thrust into the gaming limelight.

Set in feudal Japan, *Karateka* was a combat/adventure game that set a whole number of industry firsts including cut-scenes, large animated characters, scrolling backgrounds and wonderfully fluid, lifelike animation. It sold over 500,000 copies and took the games industry by storm. In fact, the only mundane thing about *Karateka* was the overly familiar plot that saw you rescuing the princess Mariko from the evil Akuma (no, not the *Street Fighter* boss, but an evil spirit).

Considering it only used two buttons, *Karateka*'s combat system was surprisingly complex – you were able to control the height of your kicks and punches and could also dodge or charge your opponents. In fact, the only problem you'd encounter was the fact that you'd automatically default to your fighting stance; approach the Princess in this mode and she'd instantly kill you with one hit, which makes us wonder why we were rescuing her in the first place…





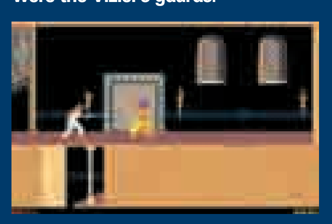
A STAR IS BORN

Even today, *Prince Of Persia* is an amazingly playable game – superb animation, fiendish puzzles and pixel-perfect jumps all combine to create a wonderful gaming experience. Thanks to the wonders of rotoscoping, the animation throughout the game was superb – even the Spectrum and Game Boy received wonderful conversions.

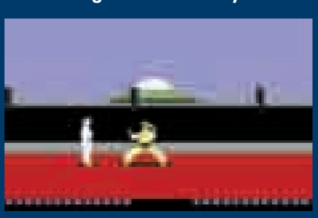
Escaping from the Vizier's dungeon was not an easy task and all manner of nasty traps and tricks stood between you and your Princess. Collapsing floors, pressure-sensitive portcullises and treacherous spikes were just a few of the many hazards you had to negotiate, and then of course there were the Vizier's guards.

Although the combat did not share the intricacy of *Karateka*'s, it was still of a very high standard and very enjoyable – trading blows with your opponents got quite hair-raising and created some tense moments. Being a platformer, *Prince Of Persia* had a fair share of precision jumping, but any frustration was immediately dissolved when the Prince gracefully leapt over a particularly tricky section.

With only an hour to complete the game (although it has been finished by two gamers in 17 minutes and 45 seconds), *Prince Of Persia* was not for the faint-hearted. But those that did persevere would discover a timeless classic that still influences games to this day.



▲ The swordfights with the Vizier's guards were some of the most nerve-wracking sections of the game.



▲ *Karateka*'s combat mechanics were more detailed, but the Prince's animation was superior.

ONGST GAMES



▲ The Prince has appeared on the SNES…



▲ …and the PC, among many other formats.

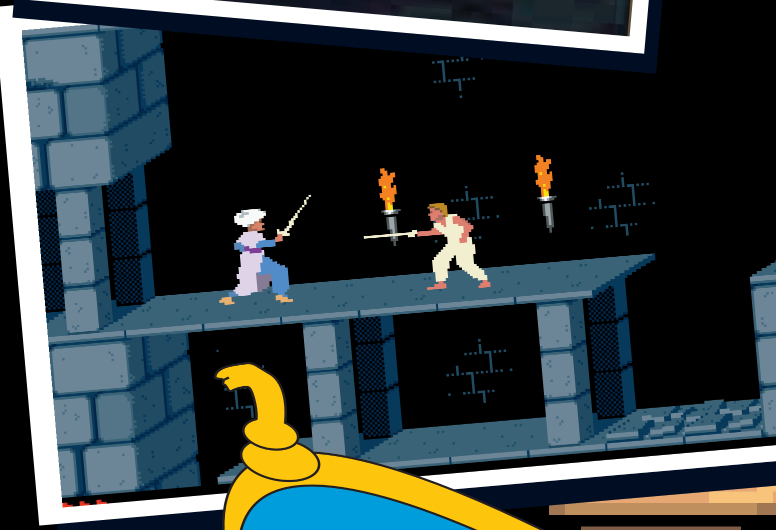
as exotic; being a huge fan of the *Arabian Nights*, Persia became the perfect choice. When Mechner's new game was released in 1989 it earned instant acclaim from critics and public alike and received numerous awards (including the Generation 4/ Canal+ Game of the Decade award in 1997). Although it first appeared on the Apple II, it was eventually converted to a whole slew of consoles and computers including the Amiga, Mega Drive, PC Engine, SAM Coupé and many, many more.

Prince Of Persia's other claim to fame is the number of groundbreaking features it contains that revolutionised the gaming scene, including the incredibly realistic use of rotoscoping, a solid story to drive the game forward and the introduction of the all-important health bar. In fact, if it wasn't for *Prince Of Persia*, it's highly likely that *Tomb Raider* and other arcade adventures would never have been created.

With the massive success of *Prince Of Persia*, it was inevitable that there would be a sequel. *Prince Of Persia 2: The Shadow And The Flame* appeared in 1993 and greatly expanded upon the Prince's initial adventure – instead of being confined to the dank dungeon of the original, you were now able to explore ships, rooftops and all manner of far-flung locations. Although it was once again critically acclaimed, it never achieved the same success as the original game. However, the only truly dark cloud over the *Prince Of Persia* legacy is the horrendous 3D version that appeared in 1999. The transition into the third dimension totally destroyed the precision gaming that made the original such a joy to play.

Fortunately, however, Ubi Soft's *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* is coming along nicely (see page 48 for more details) and once more gives us hope for one of the greatest games of all time.





"IT'S ALL IN THE REFLEXES"

Before the likes of motion capture, rotoscoping was the best method of making computer-based (or animated) characters move as realistically as possible. To create the amazingly agile Prince, Jordan Mechner initially used a video camera to film his brother running, rolling and performing various leaps and slides. Once everything had been filmed, it was then a case of hand tracing every movie frame and transferring it to his Apple II.

After everything was stored in the computer, Mechner began the arduous task of copying the frames into the image of the Prince and his assailants. Even though he had not been professionally trained as an animator or artist, Mechner was able to create the most revolutionary animation ever seen in a game.





▲ Jordan Mechner's painstaking methods of animation certainly paid off. The Prince's movements were fluid and responsive – even the Game Boy version (right) was a shining example of how to use a machine's capabilities to the fullest.

WHY I LOVED PRINCE OF PERSIA

Although I had played *Prince Of Persia* on many other systems (including the shockingly impressive Amstrad CPC 464 version), it wasn't until playing the game on the SNES that I truly fell in love with it. For starters, it looked like nothing else around – my friends and I would often watch entranced as the nimble prince ran through his entire repertoire of moves, all the while gobsmacked by how good a game could look.

Graphics weren't everything however, and fortunately *Prince Of Persia* also boasted some fantastic gameplay and thought-provoking puzzles. Even today I regularly go back to *Prince Of Persia* and I urge anybody else with access to this delightful game to do the same.

DARRAN JONES

SURVIVAL HORROR

Since the days when we were first enthralled by the Atari 2600's *Haunted House*, the survival horror genre has ballooned into an unstoppable zombie-infested juggernaut. Games like *Alone In The Dark* and Capcom's *Resident Evil* have been filling us with excitement, fear and dread for the last ten years, and the latter is progressing in leaps and bounds with spin offs like the *Resident Evil: Dead Aim* series and *Resident Evil Outbreak* – the first online survival horror outing. Are you brave enough to take a stroll into the murky past of survival horror?

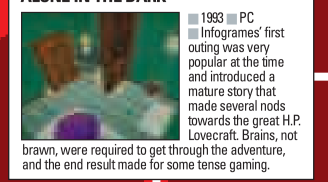
ACTION

HAUNTED HOUSE



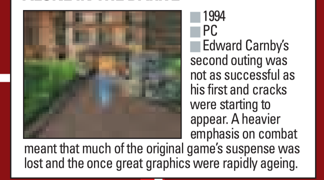
■ 1981
■ Atari 2600
Forget Infogrames' *Alone In The Dark*, this is where survival horror really started. A limited inventory, rooms that were inaccessible until you had specific items, and a variety of different monsters set the blueprint for years to come.

ALONE IN THE DARK



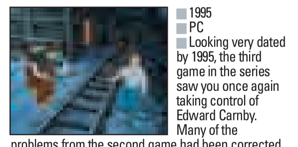
■ 1993 ■ PC
■ Infogrames' first outing was very popular at the time and introduced a mature story that made several nods towards the great H.P. Lovecraft. Brains, not brawn, were required to get through the adventure, and the end result made for some tense gaming.

ALONE IN THE DARK 2



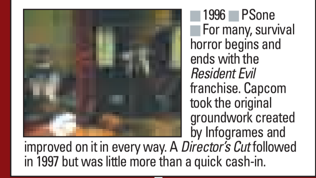
■ 1994
■ PC
■ Edward Carnby's second outing was not as successful as his first and cracks were starting to appear. A heavier emphasis on combat meant that much of the original game's suspense was lost and the once great graphics were rapidly ageing.

ALONE IN THE DARK 3



■ 1995
■ PC
■ Looking very dated by 1995, the third game in the series saw you once again taking control of Edward Carnby. Many of the problems from the second game had been corrected, but the series had lost its edge…

RESIDENT EVIL



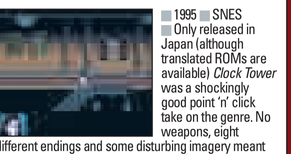
■ 1996 ■ PSone
■ For many, survival horror begins and ends with the *Resident Evil* franchise. Capcom took the original groundwork created by Infogrames and improved on it in every way. A *Director's Cut* followed in 1997 but was little more than a quick cash-in.

DEEP FEAR

■ 1998 ■ Saturn
■ Set deep below the sea, *Deep Fear* was the Saturn's equivalent to *Resident Evil*. Incredibly hard to get hold of now, *Deep Fear* had plenty of interesting touches, the constant topping up of your air pressure being a particular favourite.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

CLOCK TOWER



■ 1995 ■ SNES
■ Only released in Japan (although translated ROMs are available) *Clock Tower* was a shockingly good point 'n' click take on the genre. No weapons, eight different endings and some disturbing imagery meant this beat *Silent Hill* at its own game by four years.

CLOCK TOWER

■ 1997 ■ PSone
Clock Tower and its sequel, *Clock Tower 2: The Struggle Within*, used the same point 'n' click style found on the earlier SNES game. Unfortunately, the games suffered from some atrocious dialogue that undermines much of the atmosphere.

SCI-FI

OVERBLOOD

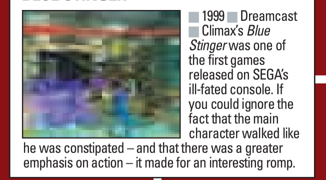
■ 1997 ■ PSone
■ This was the genre's first spin-off into sci-fi. *Overblood's* premise is rather interesting (stop a fungus you've been infected with), but a sloppy camera (fully 3D, mind), poorly implemented arcade sections and some ropey collision detection sealed the game's fate.

RPG

PARASITE EVE

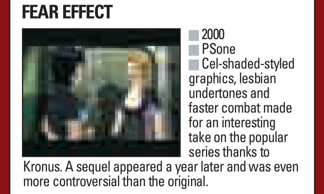
■ 1998 ■ PSone
■ Although incredibly short, Square's *Parasite Eve* was superb while it lasted. A unique combat system (later used by *Vagrant Story*) and decent RPG elements made for an engaging diversion, with the sequel taking a more action-orientated approach.

BLUE STINGER



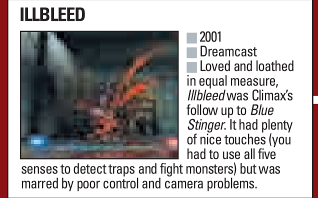
■ 1999 ■ Dreamcast ■ Climax's *Blue Stinger* was one of the first games released on SEGA's ill-fated console. If you could ignore the fact that the main character walked like he was constipated – and that there was a greater emphasis on action – it made for an interesting romp.

FEAR EFFECT



■ 2000 ■ PSone ■ Cel-shaded-styled graphics, lesbian undertones and faster combat made for an interesting take on the popular series thanks to Kronus. A sequel appeared a year later and was even more controversial than the original.

ILLBLEED

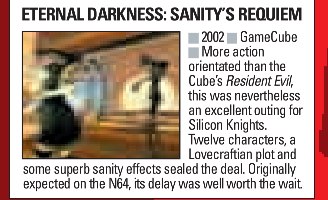


■ 2001 ■ Dreamcast ■ Loved and loathed in equal measure, *Illbleed* was Climax's follow up to *Blue Stinger*. It had plenty of nice touches (you had to use all five senses to detect traps and fight monsters) but was marred by poor control and camera problems.

ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY

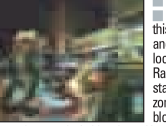
■ 2002 ■ PS2 ■ Capcom's sequel offered superb visuals, a decent selection of characters and a heavier emphasis on the combat that was so popular in the original. A third game is already in development and features Jean Reno (see page 62 for more details).

ETERNAL DARKNESS: SANITY'S REQUIEM



■ 2002 ■ GameCube ■ More action orientated than the Cube's *Resident Evil*, this was nevertheless an excellent outing for Silicon Knights. Twelve characters, a Lovecraftian plot and some superb sanity effects sealed the deal. Originally expected on the N64, its delay was well worth the wait.

RESIDENT EVIL 2

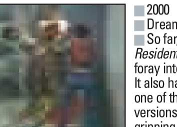


■ 1998 ■ PSone ■ Everything about this sequel was bigger and better. The location was now Raccoon City's police station and the zombies were as bloodthirsty as ever. You took control of either Leon Kennedy or Claire Redfield with each character receiving their own disc.

RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS

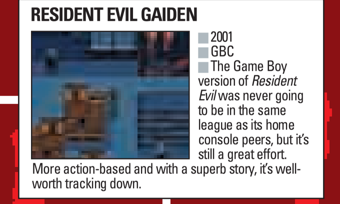
■ 1999 ■ PSone ■ *Resident Evil 3* marked a change of direction for the series; you were now able to fight your way through Raccoon City instead of being tied to one location. The constant attacks by the monstrous Nemesis also gave the game a more arcadey feel.

RESIDENT EVIL: CODE VERONICA



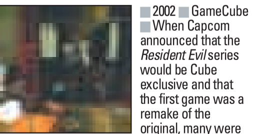
■ 2000 ■ Dreamcast ■ So far, this is *Resident Evil's* only foray into 3D gaming. It also happens to be one of the best versions as well. A gripping story, impressive visuals and even more details about *Resi's* back story make for a fantastic game.

RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN



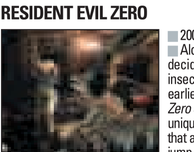
■ 2001 ■ GBC ■ The Game Boy version of *Resident Evil* was never going to be in the same league as its home console peers, but it's still a great effort. More action-based and with a superb story, it's well-worth tracking down.

RESIDENT EVIL



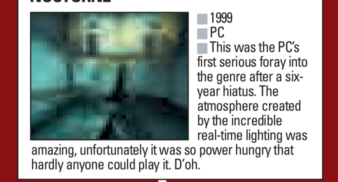
■ 2002 ■ GameCube ■ When Capcom announced that the *Resident Evil* series would be Cube exclusive and that the first game was a remake of the original, many were up in arms. Fortunately, stunning visuals and an extra 70 per cent of gameplay meant it was worth revisiting.

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO



■ 2003 ■ GameCube ■ Along with a decidedly more insectoid theme than earlier instalments, *Zero* also featured a unique zapping system that allowed you to jump between two characters. It also delivers more of the important Mythos (something that will continue in *Resident Evil 4*).

NOCTURNE



■ 1999 ■ PC ■ This was the PC's first serious foray into the genre after a six-year hiatus. The atmosphere created by the incredible real-time lighting was amazing, unfortunately it was so power hungry that hardly anyone could play it. D'oh.

COUNTDOWN: VAMPIRES

■ 2000 ■ PSone ■ It may have had an interesting idea (you could use an antidote to restore vampires to their original human forms) but the fact that any other weapon was more powerful made it totally pointless. Another tired example of the genre

ALONE IN THE DARK 4

■ 2001 ■ PS2 ■ Instead of going back to its roots, the fourth game took too many ideas from *Resident Evil* and suffered badly as a result. *Silent Hill 2* was another inspiration, with *AITD4* using lighting in a similar (but not as effective) way.

ONIMUSHA WARLORDS

■ 2001 ■ PS2 ■ Taking a leaf out of its own book, Capcom this time replaced its zombies with demons and set everything in feudal Japan. The end result was a fast-paced game that was later improved upon with the Xbox's *Genma Onimusha*.

PUZZLE

SOS ESCAPE

■ 2002 ■ PS2 ■ Irem's *SOS Escape* sees you battling against the elements instead of the usual monsters. What follows is a unique take on the genre that places you as a journalist having to negotiate an earthquake-ravaged city.

SILENT HILL

■ 1999 ■ PSone ■ What made *Silent Hill* such a departure from the *Resident Evil* games was the vulnerability of the main character – here was an everyday Joe up to his eyes in some of the most disturbing shit ever committed to a videogame.

D2

■ 2000 ■ Dreamcast ■ *D2's* slow, methodical gameplay wasn't to everyone's taste; a real pity as under the surface was a sprawling adventure that totally captured the isolation of its Canadian setting. There was also plenty of unsettling imagery, meaning this wasn't for the faint-hearted.

SILENT HILL 2

■ 2001 ■ PS2 ■ Konami's sequel took the first game by the neck and gave it a damn good shaking. Atmosphere was created thanks to superb lighting effects and a deeply disturbing story. *Silent Hill 3* has just been released but doesn't have the same advances.

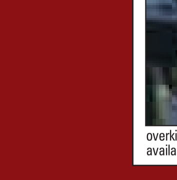
PROJECT ZERO

■ 2002 ■ PS2 ■ Based on a true story, *Fatal Frame* sees you as a young schoolgirl who must find her missing brother. What made this so refreshing was the protagonist's camera that was able to capture the spirits of ghosts.

CLOCK TOWER 3

■ 2003 ■ PS2 ■ Since the *Clock Tower* games have been released, they've never found a decent footing in Europe. Although this latest incarnation fixes a lot of problems from previous titles, it's still far from perfect. The lack of weapons is still a refreshing change though

DINO CRISIS



■ 1999 ■ PSone ■ In a stroke of genius, Capcom replaced its famous zombies and 2D environments with a 3D world populated by all manner of nasty reptilians. Sadly, the sequel opted for overkill and cranked up the weapons and ammo available, making it a pale shadow of the original.

CARRIER



■ 2000 ■ Dreamcast ■ With Capcom's *Code Veronica* just around the corner, *Carrier* never got the praise it deserved. A shame really as there was quite a lot to recommend in Jaleco's title, including a strong combat system and a unique device for tracking the elusive virus

GALLERIANS

■ 2000 ■ PSone ■ With nods to both *Akira* and *Dark City*, Ascii's *Gallerians* used gameplay powered by psychic powers and drugs to create a wonderfully dark, dystopian atmosphere. A sequel (*Gallerians: Ash*) appeared on the PlayStation2 and offered a similar experience.

MARTIAN GOTHIC

■ 2001 ■ PC ■ Set on Mars, *Martian Gothic* took your everyday survival theme and added a neat twist; there was a virus that would mutate humans that came into contact with it. As a result you had to juggle your three main characters to ensure they didn't meet each other.

EXTERMINATION

■ 2001 ■ PS2 ■ With a similar theme to the film *The Thing*, *Extermination* saw you step into the shoes of Dennis Riley, who must investigate an alien virus in the Antarctic. A nice touch is that you could actually be infected by the virus – is no-one safe any more?

RUN LIKE HELL

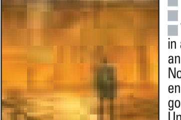
■ 2003 ■ PS2 ■ Boasting an impressive voice cast including the likes of Lance Henrikson and Clancy Brown, *Run Like Hell* is another fast-paced addition to the genre. *Aliens* is a heavy influence and the unlimited ammo means that its ties to the genre are tenuous at best.

FILM/TV LICENCE

THE RING: TERROR'S REALM

■ 2000 ■ Dreamcast ■ Based on the famous Japanese horror films, but only really paying lip service to them, *The Ring: Terror's Realm* is generally seen as one of the worst games in the genre. Play it if you dare.

BLAIR WITCH TRILOGY



■ 2000 ■ PC ■ This was the first in a three-part series and used the Nocturne graphics engine to reasonably good effect. Unfortunately, none of the games were that good, with only the third offering any sort of enjoyment.

EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING

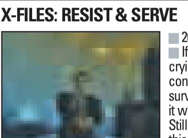
■ 2001 ■ Dreamcast ■ Using a heavy arcade theme did little to save the averageness that was *Hail To The King*. The game's biggest problem was that the *Resident Evil* control system was not suited to gameplay that required the killing of many enemies.

THE THING



■ 2002 ■ Xbox ■ Following on directly from John Carpenter's superb film, *The Thing* is the perfect example of how to do a film licence properly. Your squad of men had their own abilities, and paranoia amongst them caused as many problems as the Thing itself.

X-FILES: RESIST & SERVE



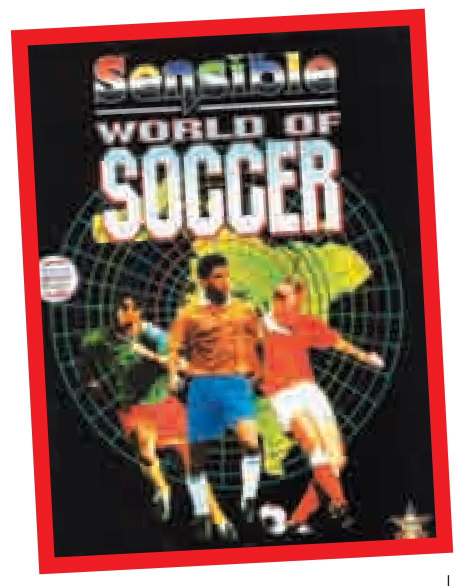
■ 2003 ■ PS2 ■ If anything was crying out to be converted into a survival horror game it was *The X-Files*. Still in development, this is looking very good indeed with the player able to control both Mulder and Scully in a brand new adventure.



Why Don't They Remake?



S·E·N·S·I·B·L·E W·O·R·L·D O·F S·O·C·C·E·R



Released: **1995**
Publisher: **Renegade Software**
Developer: **Sensible Software**
Format: **Amiga, PC**

Football games these days can be divided firmly into two categories, namely arcade and management. Occasionally one will try its hand at the other – arcade games featuring leagues and customisation options, or sim games allowing players to take control on the pitch. The problem here is that the adventurous elements often feel either poorly executed or insubstantial.

But what if one game could successfully straddle both variants, offering a highly playable soccer game with as much freedom and depth as any management title? Such a game does exist and it's not something we're looking forward to, rather something we're rediscovering. All rise for the king of sports games, *Sensible World Of Soccer*.

Featuring an obscene amount of teams and players (in the region of 1,500 and 30,000 respectively), *SWOS* was – and, to some, still is – the quintessential sports simulation. Serving up both short-term thrills and longevity to die for (how many other games can boast twenty years' worth of management?), the simplistic front-end and style hid a level of playability that is arguably yet to be beaten. The frequent mistake with footie games is that simplicity is an art form and while modern soccer titles strive for realism, learning to play them is often much more complicated than it needs to be.

Perhaps even better than the game itself is the variety of ways in which a remake could be handled. At the simplest end of the spectrum, the Game Boy Advance lends itself perfectly to the game, and with updates to rosters and leagues could be one of the most concise footy games in years. Better still, the series could be moved to a new home on one of the big three consoles – retaining the same viewpoint but with 3D characters would be a distinct possibility, and provided the same tight control could be implemented, we'd be looking at a winner.

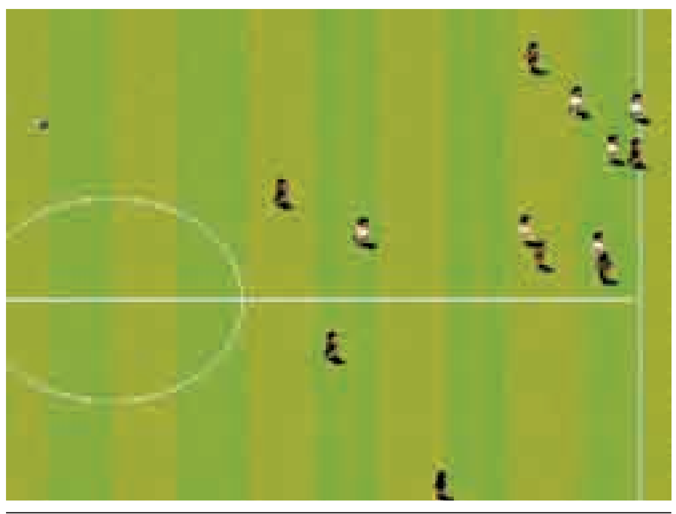


▶ With over 30,000 players and 1,500 teams, *Sensible World Of Soccer* was a comprehensive football management title. And damn good fun, to boot.

Throw in some of the crowning glories of this most recent generation of consoles and the appeal grows even further still – imagine team line-ups and values being constantly updated online. Imagine buying, selling and trading players over the Net. Imagine playing in leagues or tournaments where every club is controlled by another player somewhere else in the world. All very real possibilities, but will we ever see them take form? We seriously hope so, although for the sake of our social lives, we're sort of hoping not…



▶ *Sensible World Of Soccer* combined the best elements of football gaming – plenty of stats, a plethora of management options and complete freedom to do what you liked with your team…



▶ … but there was also plenty of yer actual ball-on-pitch action. Will we ever see such a perfect combination again? Well, if anyone wants to remake *SWOS* we'd be interested…

Romance of the Three Kingdoms

A HISTORICAL SERIES

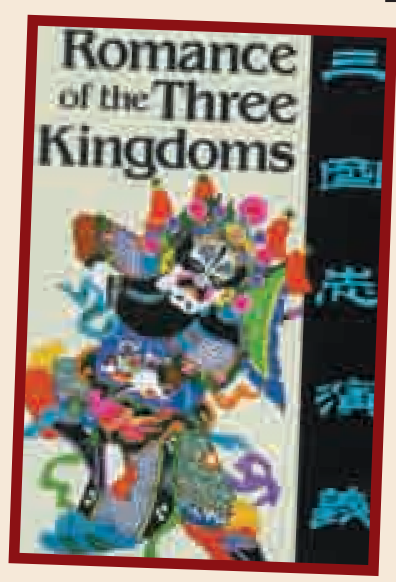
Over the years, we've seen some really late licensed games but one stands out as possibly the oldest licence ever used in gaming. The hugely popular Luo Guanzhong book on which both the *Romance Of The Three Kingdoms* and *Dynasty Warriors* series are based is more historical documentation than fiction. Supposedly, around three quarters of the content is factual, with the rest made up with artistic licence and elaboration concerning details of the Han Dynasty of 2nd and 3rd Century feudal China.

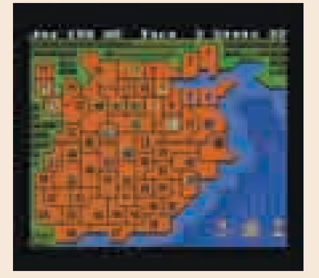
Clocking in at not six months, not even six years but a full six hundred years after the original book was released, the first *Romance Of The Three Kingdoms* game arrived courtesy of Koei in 1988 (although Capcom's *Destiny Of An Emperor* used the setting but not the plot at around the same time). A strategy game focused heavily on gameplay rather than eye candy, the NES and PC title proved a success in the East due to the popularity of the book and has since spawned a host of sequels across most platforms. These all follow the same format right down to an emphasis on gameplay above all else, but many titles and ports have failed to make it out of Japan where it has now reached its eighth incarnation on the PS2.

Unsurprisingly, the games that share the book's name follow the narrative a lot closer than the many offshoot titles. These haven't all been for the thinkers, either – in 1997, Koei released *Dynasty Warriors* for the PSone, a one-on-one fighter featuring 16 of the more popular characters from the *Three Kingdoms* legacy. Since the title received very mixed receptions (it was, after all, released mere months after the superior *Soul Edge*), the direction was changed for *Dynasty Warriors 2* and its sequels, which are all large-scale roaming beat-'em-ups.

Recently, the *Three Kingdoms* characters and storylines have also cropped up elsewhere in gaming with the *Dynasty Warriors* series returning to its strategic roots in *Dynasty Tactics* and, to a lesser extent, the two *Kessen* games on PlayStation2, but that's not exactly retro, is it? Well, not yet at least…







The convoluted history of feudal China is simplified with a handy grid system…

That's Not Lu Bu...

The missing link in the *Three Kingdoms* series?

Keen-eyed gamers will recognise this particular title as Koei's much-overlooked *Gemfire* (*Royal Blood* in Japan), and from presentation to execution it's clear that this is derived from the same engine that powers the *Romance* saga. The game itself is obviously tailored for a different audience, though – sporting a Middle Ages fantasy setting, *Gemfire* isn't based on an existing text which gives it much more creative freedom than its historical counterparts. Easily rivalling *ROTK* in terms of playability, fans of the long-running series are urged to investigate and enjoy this long lost relative.





Dynasty Warriors 2 marked *ROTK*'s first foray into the realm of the roaming battle-'em-up.

Whole Lotta Love

Those *ROTK* games in full…

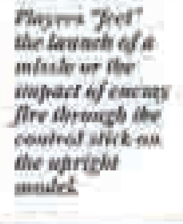
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS	1988 (KOEI)
DESTINY OF AN EMPEROR	1989 (CAPCOM)
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS II	1990 (KOEI)
DESTINY OF AN EMPEROR 2	1991 (CAPCOM
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS III	1992 (KOEI)
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS IV	1994 (KOEI)
DYNASTY WARRIORS	1997 (KOEI)
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS V	1997 (KOEI)
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS VI	1999 (KOEI)
DYNASTY WARRIORS 2	2000 (KOEI)
KESSEN	2000 (KOEI)
DYNASTY WARRIORS 3	2001 (KOEI)
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS VII	2001 (KOEI)
THREE KINGDOMS: FATE OF THE DRAGON	2001 (EIDOS)
DYNASTY TACTICS	2002 (KOEI)
DRAGON THRONE: BATTLE OF RED CLIFF	2002 (INFOGRAMES)
DYNASTY WARRIORS 3: XTREME LEGENDS	2002 (KOEI)
KESSEN II	2002 (KOEI)
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS VIII	2002 (KOEI)
DYNASTY WARRIORS 4	2003 (KOEI)



AFTER BURNER (Arcade) SEGA, 1987 – Original arcade flyer



But no matter who wins, you win. *Sight* and *sound* take AFTER BURNER players two-thirds of the way into the adrenalin-pumping world of the supersonic jet pilot….*motion* completes the journey. SEGA has combined astonishing 3-D graphics and rich stereophonic sound in an enclosed cockpit that features the pitch and yaw of a real jet fighter. Push the stick forward and your fighter pitches forward…bank right and you feel the G-forces build as your aircraft rolls right. A hand throttle; seat-belt, warning beacons; and a control stick with missile-launch and rapid-fire cannon triggers, complete the layout. Players move through 23 progressive stages ranging from dogfights to raids on enemy ground installations. On-screen graphics include target "lock-on" and rear-scanning radar. AFTER BURNER is as close as you can get—without enlisting—to the realism of a supersonic dogfight. That means one thing—repeated play. So, no matter who wins the game…you win the profits. Call your authorized SEGA distributor for a closer look at AFTER BURNER.



Players "feel" the launch of a missile or the impact of enemy fire through the control stick on the upright model.

The deluxe AFTER BURNER features four-way cockpit rotation.











All the play features of AFTER BURNER are included in the compact upright model.

SEGA Enterprises, Inc., (USA), 2149 Paragon Drive, P.O. Box 610550, San Jose, CA 95161-0550. (408) 435-0201.







SEGA SATURN

ALTHOUGH SEGA HAS NEVER REALLY SHARED THE SAME LEVEL OF SUCCESS AS NINTENDO, ITS MEGA DRIVE DID WELL AROUND THE WORLD. WITH THE LIKES OF FIFA SOCCER, JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL AND DESERT STRIKE IT APPEALED TO THE SLIGHTLY OLDER GAMER. EVEN THE DESIGN AND COLOUR OF THE MACHINE SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT SEGA WAS CLUED-UP AS TO WHERE THE INDUSTRY WAS HEADING. SO WHAT WENT WRONG FOR THE SEGA SATURN?

As the 16-bit era drew to a close, SEGA seemed to lose sight of where the games industry was going and attempted to remain at the cutting edge by releasing numerous pieces of ill-fated hardware. First came the Mega CD, which offered very little over the standard Mega Drive other than improved sound quality and horribly pixellated full motion video. Next up was the 32X, which bizarrely reverted to cartridges as a storage medium, while barely being more technologically advanced than the SEGA Virtua Processor (SVP) which had been used to boost the Mega Drive conversion of *Virtua Racing*. Plus there were hardware combinations such as the MultiMega, which included both Mega Drive and Mega CD technology.

Of course, this was a difficult period for the entire games industry – Panasonic's 3DO Interactive Multiplayer and Atari's Jaguar were already failing to excite gamers, while Nintendo was merely treading water with the SNES. It was during this time that the transition from 2D sprites to 3D polygons was taking place.

It seems strange, then, that when SEGA started working on the Saturn technology (which was reportedly during 1992), it was initially designing a piece of kit capable of producing the most advanced 2D graphics ever. However, in 1993 Sony announced that it would be entering the console hardware market a year later, and upon seeing the PlayStation's impressive polygon-pushing capabilities, SEGA was forced to rethink its plans. Over the next year, SEGA would hurriedly add a multitude of extra chips to bring the Saturn's 3D specification up to scratch. Well, almost.

The Saturn eventually launched in Japan on 24 November 1994 for ¥44,800 (£225), and thanks to a conversion of SEGA's popular *Virtua Fighter* arcade game the entire first batch of 250,000 units was sold in just two days. Of course, Saturn *Virtua Fighter* was infamously awful, with far fewer polygons than the original version and some of the worst clipping in the history of 3D videogames. Even so, Japanese gamers didn't seem to care, and for the first few months of its life the Saturn continued to outsell the PlayStation, which launched with fighting game *Toh Shin Den* and a

SPECIAL FEATURES

IS IT A CONSOLE? A KARAOKE MACHINE? A VIDEO CD PLAYER? ALL OF THE ABOVE, ACTUALLY…

While many great Saturn games are now fading into the mists of time, the special features the console itself had are all but forgotten already. As well as being compatible with Karaoke CD-Gs (a feature that was undoubtedly popular in Japan), a photo-CD operating system which allowed you to view digitally saved images and manipulate them with a selection of tools was also available. On top of that, SEGA released an official MPEG Card that enabled video CD playback, though as you'd expect it was never particularly popular.

However, the most interesting Saturn peripheral came in the form of a Net Link adapter which plugged directly into the cartridge slot and gave Japanese and American gamers the opportunity to browse the Web, send and receive email and even play certain games online. Featuring only a 28.8Kbps modem, the system was limited to say the least, but would be the foundation on which Dreamcast and its DreamArena online network would later be built.



◀ The Photo CD system let Saturn owners tinker with digital images on their console. Clever, that.

SPECIFICATIONS

CPU (Central Processing Unit): 2 x Hitachi SH2 32-bit RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computing) processors
CPU Speed: 28.6MHz
Additional CPU: Hitachi SH1 32-bit RISC processor
Additional CPU Speed: 20MHz

Memory: Main RAM (Random Access Memory): 2MB
VRAM (Video Random Access Memory): 1.54MB
Audio RAM: 540KB
CD-ROM Cache: 540KB

Resolution: 320x224, 640x224 or 704x480

GPU (Graphics Processing Unit): VDP1 (32-bit)

VDP1 Capabilities 500,000 Flat Shaded Polygons Per Second
200,000 Texture Mapped Polygons Per Second
Texture Mapping
Gouraud Shading
Virtually Unlimited Number Of Sprites
Sprite Scaling Effects (Enlargement, Rotation etc.)

Additional GPU: VDP2 (32-bit)

VDP2 Capabilities Five Simultaneous Scrolling Backgrounds
Two Simultaneous Rotating Playfields

Sound: Yamaha 24-bit Digital Signal Processor (22.6MHz)
Motorola 68EC000 Sound Processor (11.3MHz)

32 PCM (Pulse Code Modulation) Channels
8 FM (Frequency Modulation) Channels
44.1KHz Sampling Rate

Storage: CD-ROM (2x)
Optional Video CD, Photo CD, EBook and Digital Karaoke
Optional 512KB Memory Cartridge For Game Saves

Input/Output: High-speed Serial Communications Port
Internal 32-bit Expansion Port
Internal Multi AV Port
Composite Video/Stereo
NTSC RF
S-Video
RGB
HDTV



ROUND THE BACK



Certain models could have switches fitted, allowing them to play imported games at 50 or 60Hz.

The multi-out was hardly used here in the UK. In Japan, however, it was used for link-up games.

Similar to a S-VHS socket, the Saturn's main video output port would wear out rather too quickly.

Like the PSone, the Saturn featured a regular power input socket, just like a radio and suchlike.

"WHY I LOVE THE SEGA SATURN"

As an alternative to Sony's monster, the Saturn didn't seem to offer much, but those willing to delve a little deeper found a huge library of overlooked classics that appealed to those looking for something different. When everybody else was fighting for a copy of *Tomb Raider II*, Saturn gamers were tackling the last boss of some frantic shooter or plugging in a 4MB cartridge and playing *Street Fighter Zero 2* in near-perfect form. Although in its twilight years the Saturn became little more than a vehicle for hentai games, its delicious line-up of shooters, 2D fighters, hardware innovations and Sonic Team-developed classics keeps it up there with the Super Famicom.

Gary Adams

JAPANESE CONSOLE



▲ The Japanese Saturn was a rather drab grey, but it did have 'futuristic' blue buttons.

BRITISH CONSOLE



▲ In the UK, the Saturn was available in any colour as long as it was black, much like the Mega Drive.

superb translation of Namco's *Ridge Racer* just over a week after the Saturn.

Sadly, things didn't go quite so well around the rest of the world. Priced at $399 (£240) – $100 more than the PlayStation – the Saturn was supposed to launch in America on 2 September 1995 – a day that SEGA humorously dubbed 'Saturnday'. However, a few lucky gamers were able to buy the machine four months early at E3, though just three games were available. The problem was that while *Virtua Fighter* was massive in Japan, it wasn't overly popular with gamers in other territories, and a combination of Sony's marketing, better-looking games and lower price meant that PlayStation instantly started running rings around the Saturn (ahem).

Things did get better as developers learned how to harness the Saturn's power, though. The machine was notoriously difficult to program for, but after plenty of hard work SEGA and a few of its third-party developers found that it was possible to combine 2D and 3D visuals by using the twin processor set-up. Using this process, games such as *Virtua Fighter 2* looked far more impressive than their PlayStation equivalents, despite using fewer polygons.

Unfortunately for SEGA, Sony gradually managed to build up its range of quality PlayStation titles until there was really no contest between the two formats. Even so, the Saturn continued to thrive in Japan until 1999, and for those gamers with consoles capable of playing imported games, some of the greatest 2D shoot-em-ups and one-on-one beat-em-ups ever created were up for grabs.

MEMORY EXPANSION

When the Saturn was first unveiled, many assumed that the cartridge slot on top of the machine would allow backwards compatibility with Mega Drive games – a factor which may have been significant in the battle against PlayStation if only there had been any truth in it.

In fact, this was merely an expansion port used to connect various upgrades, such as the official SEGA Memory Cartridge. The console did have battery back-up for saving games, but the cartridge had room for many more game saves. However, it would soon be used for a different kind of memory upgrade.

While the Saturn was the undisputed king of 2D, the limited amount of internal memory meant that Capcom and SNK were having to remove animation frames from the latest one-on-one beat-'em-ups in order for them to load. Unhappy with the issue, both companies later developed and released additional RAM cartridges (first 1MB and later 4MB) that slotted straight into the top of the machine, allowing every frame to be included and loaded in a fraction of the time. Because of these RAM cartridges, games such as *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter* and *Vampire Savior* were possible.





▶ Some Saturn titles, such as *Panzer Dragoon*, have lived on through the Dreamcast to appear on today's consoles.

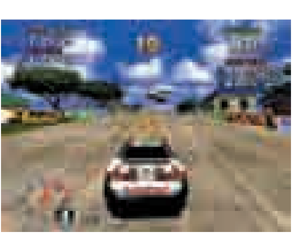
Six of the Best

The Saturn was graced with some superb games – here are a choice few

SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Publisher: **SEGA**
Year: **1995**

Although Codemasters claims that *Colin McRae* was the first rally game, it almost certainly wouldn't have been anywhere near as good as it was without the influences it took from *SEGA Rally Championship*, which was released in the arcades in 1995 and on the Saturn in 1996. With just four tracks it wasn't the longest game in the world, but its unique handling and superb graphics made this one of the Saturn's highlights, especially after the disastrous home conversion of *Daytona USA*.



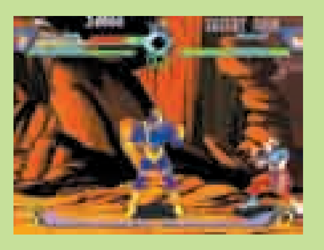


X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER

Publisher: **Capcom**
Year: **1997**

Although Capcom once snubbed the Saturn in favour of the PSone, after insisting that *Resident Evil* wasn't possible on SEGA's hardware (though *RE* did appear on the Saturn later), the company discovered that the format was perfect for converting its latest CPSII arcade games. Being the first Saturn game to make use of Capcom's 4MB RAM cartridge, *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter* impressed with its huge sprites and fast-paced two-on-two beat-'em-up action.

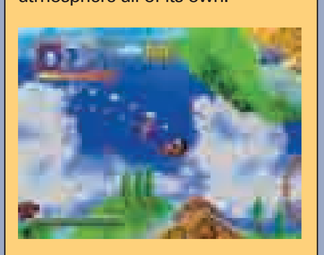




NIGHTS INTO DREAMS

Publisher: **SEGA**
Year: **1996**

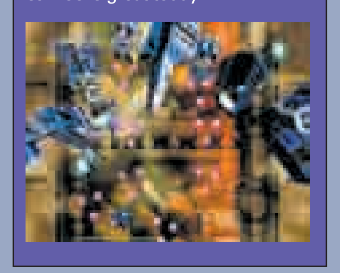
SEGA fans were desperate for a new *Sonic* game, yet despite being constantly assured that one was in development – a 3D platformer in the vein of *Super Mario 64* – it never appeared. Instead Sonic Team released *NiGHTS* – a unique action game that revolved around collecting 20 Chips (blue orbs) and using them to destroy the Ideya Capture within the time limit. Through clever use of the Saturn's limited 3D capabilities, the developers were able to create a bizarre and colourful world with an atmosphere all of its own.



RADIANT SILVERGUN

Publisher: **Treasure**
Year: **1998**

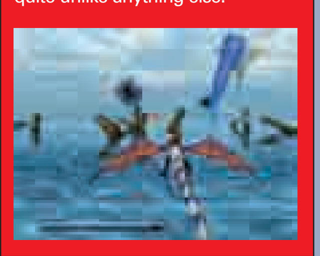
While decent third-party products were few and far between when it came to Europe, in Japan the Saturn had some of the greatest games around. Developed by Treasure, the quirky company behind *Gunstar Heroes* and *Mischief Makers*, *Radiant Silvergun* was one third-party title that really made the most of the Saturn's twin-processor set-up. Originally released as a coin-op on the STV arcade board, this classy up-screen shoot-'em-up featured a blend of 2D and 3D visuals that still looks great today.



PANZER DRAGOON

Publisher: **SEGA**
Year: **1995**

Critics might argue that *Panzer Dragoon* was merely an update of the SEGA arcade classic *Space Harrier* (with prettier graphics, of course). The truth of the matter is that they wouldn't be too far off the mark – with gameplay consisting of very little more than moving a cursor and shooting, the core structure of the game was certainly very simple. However, through clever use of art and design, and with some of the most tuneful orchestral compositions ever created for a videogame, *Panzer Dragoon* was quite unlike anything else.



VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

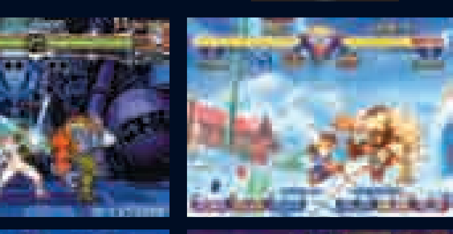
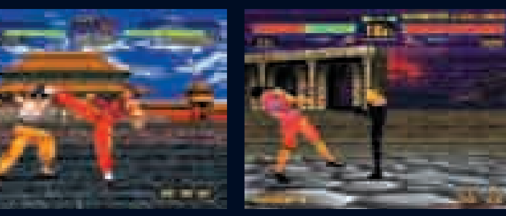
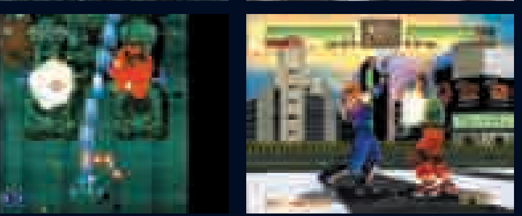
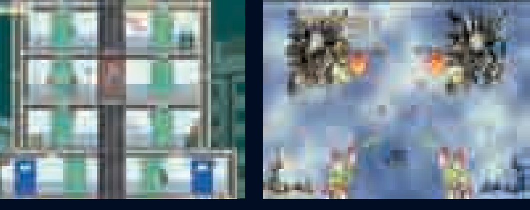
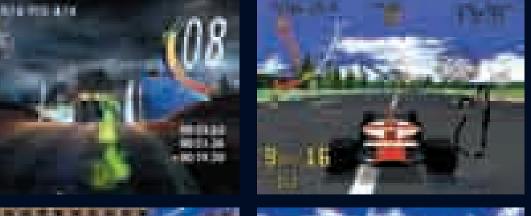
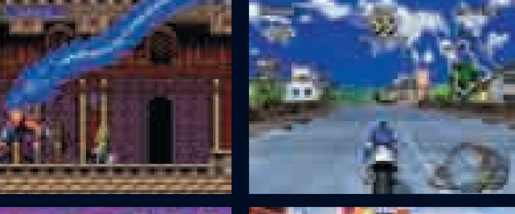
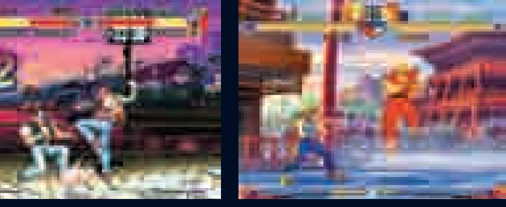
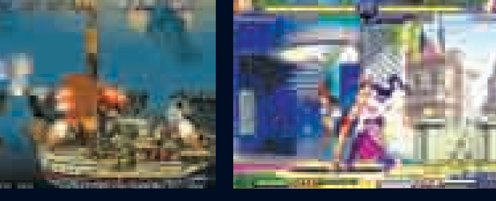
Publisher: **SEGA**
Year: **1995**

Despite performing well in Japan, the Saturn conversion of the original *Virtua Fighter* was a disaster from a technical point of view. Even so, SEGA was sure its 32-bit console was capable of far more and, after much research and development, discovered that the twin-processor architecture would allow for the limited number of polygons on offer to be integrated with scaling 2D backgrounds. Using this technique, AM2 was able to mimic the arcade version of *Virtua Fighter 4*, while processing just a fraction of the polygons.



SEGA SATURN




Classic Machine

POWER OPEN RESET

GAMES THAT NEVER QUITE MADE IT…

SONIC CRACKERS

GAMES THAT NEVER QUITE MADE IT…

Some games come out in Japan but never get converted to English, while others get released in the arcades, but never get translated to consoles. And some, like Sonic Crackers, get cancelled before they even make it out of production…

Title: **Sonic Crackers**
Developer: **SEGA Sonic Team**
Format: **Mega Drive**
Release date: **N/A**

Popular as they were, the first three Sonic The Hedgehog games had very few gameplay features to separate them; aside from different locations and the odd bit of tweaking here and there, they were essentially the same. However, when *Sonic And Knuckles* came along, Sonic Team brought a fresh lick of paint to the series in the form of lock-on technology, which enabled additional features to be accessed in *Sonic 2* and *3* when they were slotted onto the top of the new game. Aside from *Sonic 3D Flickie's Island*, which was more of a spin-off than a sequel, *Sonic And Knuckles* was the last real Sonic game to come out on the Mega Drive, but it wasn't always going to be that way.

Apparently, SEGA was working simultaneously on *Sonic And Knuckles* and another Sonic game rumoured to be *Sonic The Hedgehog 4*. Of course, by 1994 Mega Drive sales were dropping off rapidly, and following the understated release of *Sonic And Knuckles*, the other title mysteriously vanished. However, some time later a piece of previously unseen code of what was believed to be a prototype version of *Sonic 4* was leaked onto the Internet.

Entitled *Sonic Crackers*, this never-released game featured a unique gameplay gimmick – Sonic and Tails were linked together by a magical chain. By pressing jump at the right moment, it was possible for one character to slingshot the other up to higher platforms and secret areas. Although there was potential for the finished game to be extremely playable, the only code believed to be in existence didn't contain any enemies or power-ups, and was riddled with bugs that caused the game to randomly freeze. Four levels were thought to be available showing various times of the day, each with a range of colour palettes, but the instability of the code meant that few players ever got to see them.

Interestingly, *Knuckles Chaotix*, which was released on the 32X in 1995, seemed to share many similarities with the demo of *Sonic Crackers*. The level designs were almost identical and some of the music was actually the same. Of course, the 32X was a complete flop and subsequently only a few gamers ever got to sample what turned out to be one of the weakest *Sonic* games in the series.

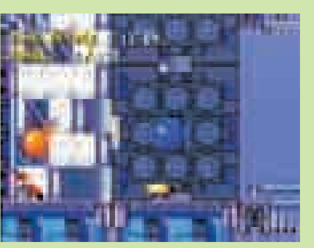
Perhaps if SEGA had continued to work on *Sonic Crackers* instead, both the game and perhaps even the company may have fared slightly better.



▲ *Sonic Crackers*' big gimmick was a 'magical' chain linking Sonic and Tails. Sounds daft but it had its uses…



▲ Only a limited amount of code is available.



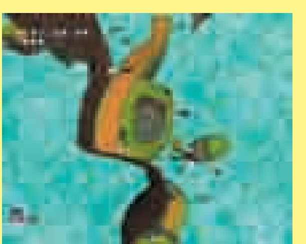
▲ Level designs were similar to *Knuckles Chaotix*.

YOU'RE BUGGING ME

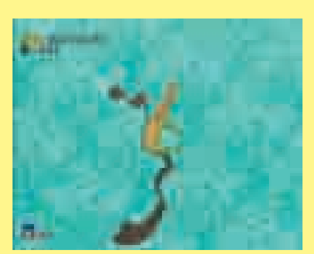
Sometimes, despite weeks of bug testing, problems with program code manage to slip through the net. Most games have a few such errors, though many of them are too small to ever get noticed. Occasionally though, the mistakes are so blatant that it makes you wonder how they were never picked up during the beta tests, as was the case with *Sonic Adventure* on the Dreamcast…



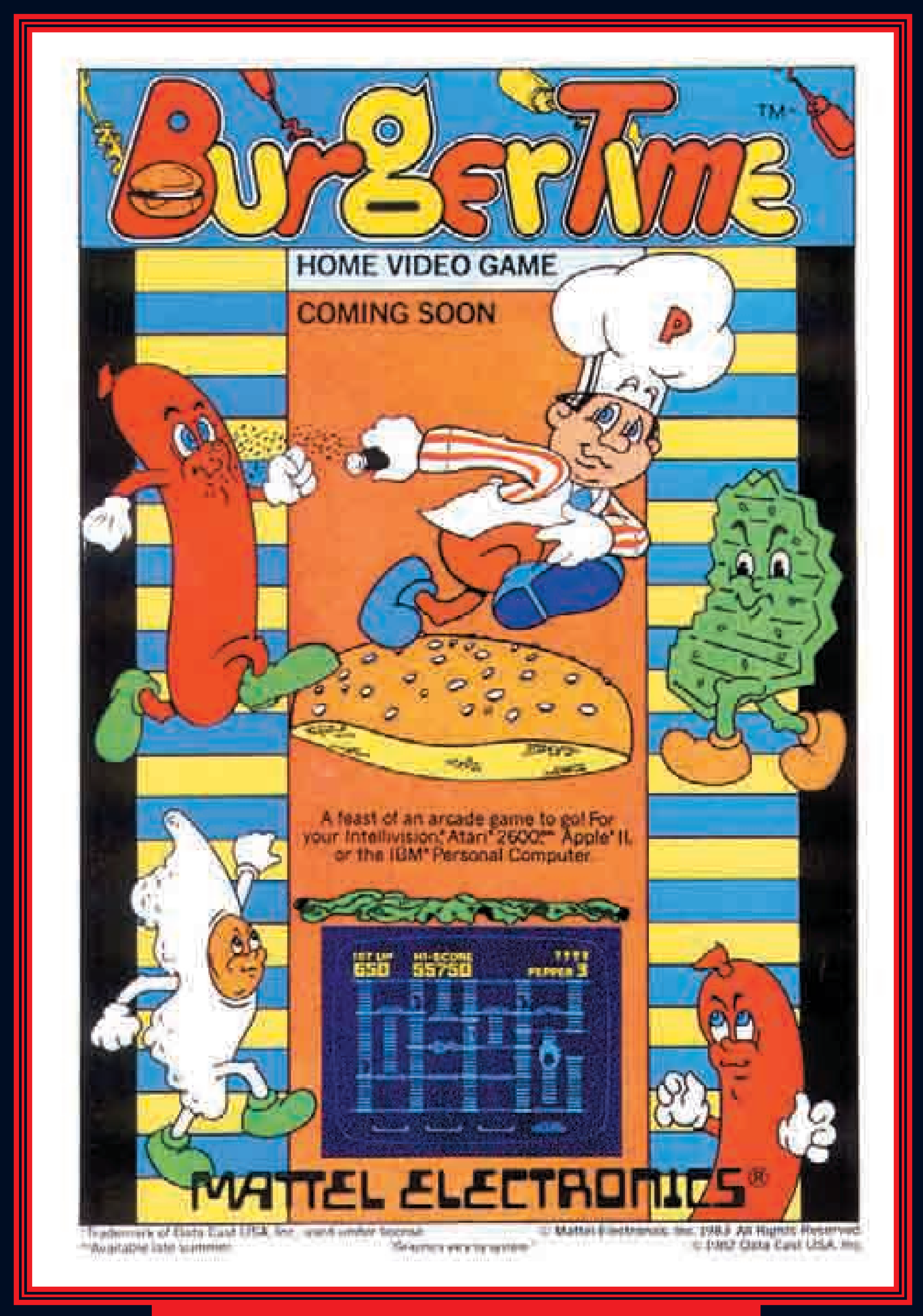
In Windy Valley – the second level in *Sonic Adventure* – Sonic and Tails are lifted over gaps with an updraft of air. But while this should be a straightforward affair, SEGA managed to implement one of the strangest (but also coolest) bugs we've ever seen.



All you need to do is pull back on the analogue stick and the characters remain hovering in the air, as does the camera, though for some reason it gets blown higher and higher into the air as the ground below disappears.



Up and up it goes resulting in more and more of the scenery popping out bit by bit. Eventually, everything is gone, including all the polygons and the 2D bitmap that surrounds the 3D world. It's so peaceful up here, we could float around for hours…



BURGER TIME (Intellivision, Atari 2600, Apple II, IBM PC) Mattel, 1983 – American advertisement

THEY SAY TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE, AND WHEN JON RITMAN AND BERNIE DRUMMOND WORKED TOGETHER ON GAMES LIKE HEAD OVER HEELS AND MATCH DAY II, GAMERS WERE TREATED TO SOMETHING SPECIAL. WE CAUGHT UP WITH JON AND BERNIE TO FIND THE SECRET OF THEIR SUCCESS…

JON RITMAN AND BERNIE DRUMMOND


Ritman (top) and Drummond (above) – a developing dream team.

In 1981 Jon Ritman decided to buy himself a ZX81 and learn to program. After a week of extremely late nights and plentiful cups of coffee, Ritman thought he was ready for a new challenge and bought himself a RAMpack and a book on machine code. Six months later, he completed his first game – *Namtir Raiders* was sold in two days and published by Artic Computing Limited. It was a clone of *Space Invaders* with the option to move your base up and down as well as left and right. "I had seen an arcade game in a pub," reveals Ritman. "I simply tried to copy the rough memory I had of the early levels – I could only do the early levels though, because I had never been good enough to get any further."

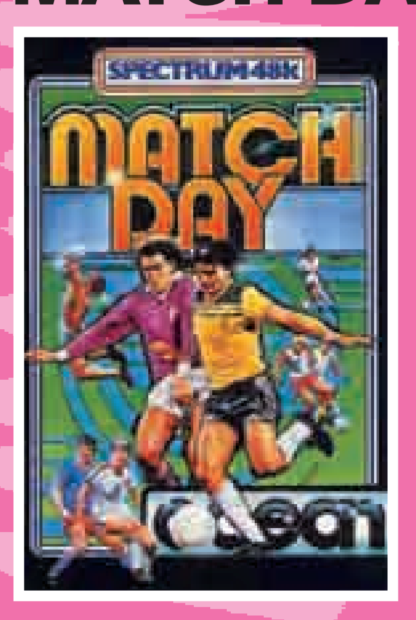
The likes of *Cosmic Debris* (an *Asteroids* clone) and *Bear Bovver* (a very well-received platformer) soon followed and Ritman quit the day job to program full time. *Bear Bovver* also marked Ritman's departure from Artic and before long he would be competing against them with the release of *Match Day*.

Bat Man was Ritman's next release and found him pairing up with Bernie Drummond after hearing that Drummond was good at drawing. A partnership was quickly formed, with the duo going on to make the likes of the superb *Head Over Heels*, *Match Day II* and the isometric adventure *Monster Max* for Rare.

Despite enjoying success in the Eighties, things later took a turn for the worse. Cranberry Source was formed in 1995 and saw Ritman and his team working on the much-hyped *QAD* (*Quintessential Art Of Destruction*). When *QAD* eventually appeared, it was a competent but lacklustre title that did little to convince the industry that Cranberry Source would be a development team worth watching. Argonaut eventually bought Cranberry Source's key assets in 1998.

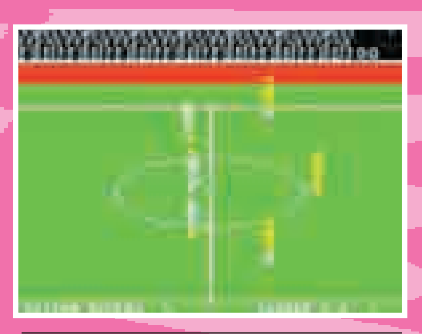
We caught up with arguably two of the greatest minds in 8-bit history to ask them about working for Rare, designing characters and to find out exactly what happened to the fabled *Match Day* arcade machine…

MATCH DAY



When *Match Day* first appeared on the Spectrum it was heralded as the greatest football game of its generation (it was basically the retro equivalent of Konami's *Pro Evolution Soccer*). There was a plethora of options that gave you the ability to change your playing times, choose from three skill levels and even change the game's borders. *Match Day's* real clincher though, was that it was simply amazing to play; players reacted incredibly well to each other, the side-on view meant it was always easy to see what was going on and corners, goal kicks and centres came with three different kicking strengths.

Match Day initially came about thanks to the C64's *International Soccer* (the industry felt that the Spectrum needed a really good football game of its own). Ritman started designing the characters – which were basically a human variation of the Bear from *Bear Bovver* – and eventually discussed his idea with Ocean's David Ward while watching a new soccer release by Artic. "I made a wild claim that my football game would be a thousand times better than Artic's," he recalls. "As I was in the last few weeks of finishing, he [Ward] rang me and asked me If I'd ever made 'that football game'. I told him that it was nearly finished and on the spot he offered me more money than I'd ever heard of."


Match Day's vast (for its time) range of options gave the game much more depth than its rivals.



When did you first get into programming?
Jon: 1981. I was a TV engineer and thought my company (Radio Rentals) would need a computer engineer as they were thinking of renting Atari 800's

How did your partnership with each other come about?
Jon: Bernie was a friend of a friend and I knew he drew cartoons, so one day as I was starting my first isometric adventure, that went on to become *Bat Man*, I asked him over to give it a try.
Bernie: I met Jon through mutual friends and at the time I was playing drums in a group that just happened to be friends with Jon. Because he was always up late at night we'd constantly be going around his house at around 11.30 with a new demo tape asking "Hi, Jon, what do you think of this?" Poor Jon had to put up with a lot of shoddy practice tapes before we eventually got talking properly.

What was it like working with each other and do you still regularly keep in touch?
Jon: Bernie is the maddest, most random, most un-technical artist you could ever meet, he is also the most creative. Yeah, we do try and stay in contact but see each other far too rarely.
Bernie: It was very, very easy working with Jon, he's got the biblical patience of Job and was a very good teacher. We eventually grew apart but are now back in touch with each other.

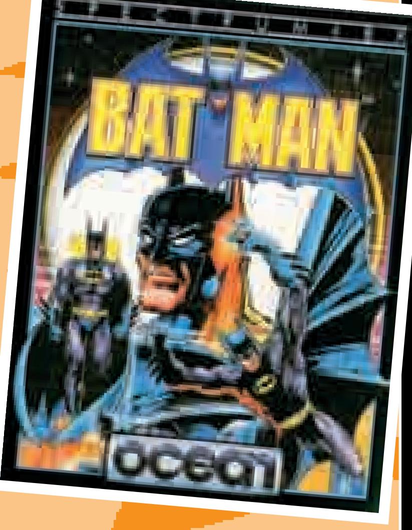
What was your ethos for creating games, and was there anybody you wanted to emulate?
Jon: Not emulate as such but there is little doubt that my biggest inspirations were the Stamper brothers [Chris, Tim and Stephen Stamper who formed Ultimate and then Rare].

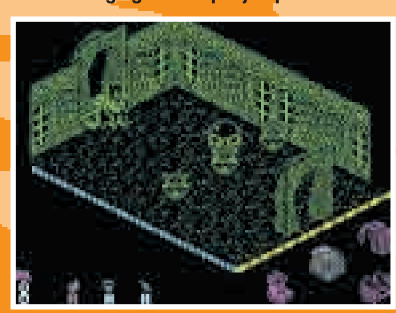
How does it feel creating some of the most loved 8-bit games ever made?
Jon: Damn good – it's great that many years after I made my 8-bit games they still create enough interest that I still get at least one mail a week either asking me about them or just writing to thank me for the amount of fun they generated. When you consider that we are talking about 15 odd years ago I find it just amazing that anyone even remembers what they were playing, let alone feels strongly enough to write to me.

BAT MAN

After being astounded by Rare's *Knight Lore*, Ritman was determined to write his own isometric adventure – *Bat Man* was the finished product and was a smash hit. The basic crux of *Bat Man* saw Robin being captured. Unfortunately, the Boy Wonder had been working on the Batmobile at the time and Batman had to track down the seven missing pieces of the car before he could spring into action.

Although his powers were initially limited, there were several devices Batman could find that afforded him new powers, be it Batboots for jumping, or the Batbag that allowed him to pick up and put down objects. Batpills also made a frequent appearance and would fall from the roof of the Batcave – the pills offered you random abilities ranging from super jumps to invulnerability. There was also a neutralising pill that would take away any current ability, and seeing that all the pills looked the same, it made for some very frustrating moments.





Bat Man's visuals were very impressive and marked Ritman's first collaboration with Bernie Drummond. "He went from crazy doodler to craftsman instantly," says Ritman of Drummond's first experience of creating visuals after an initially slow start. "He sculpted a matching eye and then an entire character – it was without doubt one of the best bits of game art I had ever seen."

What's the best 3D isometric game ever made then and why?
Jon: *Monster Max*. It would be odd if I didn't think my games were the best – if I'd thought I couldn't do a better job of it than any others out there I simply wouldn't have bothered. *Max* is the most recent of my isometric games and of course was built on my collected knowledge of the first two – it had bigger and far more complex locations and over twice as many as *Head Over Heels*.

How did you go about designing your characters?
Bernie: They're composites – they're a bit of a smile from somewhere and a bit of an eye from somewhere else. They developed a cartoony style and if anyone was ever critical of us it was because of that. We decided to make our characters extra chunky so that you could always see if they would be touching something dangerous, rather than make Batman realistic, we based him on Felix the Cat so that his head was as wide as his shoulders which were as wide as his legs, so that effectively he took up an oblong shape and you collided with an object properly. Otherwise my inspirations were Disney, Salvador Dali and Charlie Brown.

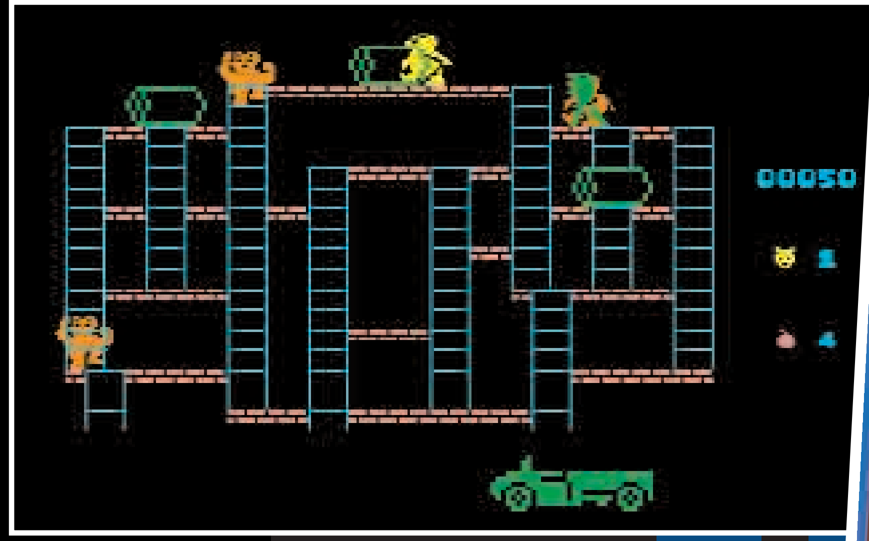
Where did the idea for Head Over Heels *come from?*
Bernie: The symbiotic nature of the characters where they used each other was entirely Jon's idea – he had read or watched something about it and the idea simply intrigued him.

And was there any truth to the rumour that it was earmarked for the N64?
Jon: None at all.

In its day, Match Day *was deemed the god of football games. Have you had a chance to play its present day equivalent,* Pro Evolution Soccer*?*
Jon: Not yet.

Were the old days of gaming better?
Jon: It was much nicer to work in tiny teams, the output per person was much higher and you could take much bigger chances.

And who were your 8- and 16-bit heroes?
Jon: The Stamper brothers were always ahead of the pack, changing the face of the industry – I'm sure I'm not the only one who can remember the first time they saw *Knight Lore* (and the way their jaw hit the floor). And to think they had





▲ *Bear Bovver* saw you helping Ted the bear collect batteries to power his car, while avoiding those pesky Bovver Bears. Addictive stuff.

finished it a year earlier and had held it back in case it damaged sales of their 2D games!

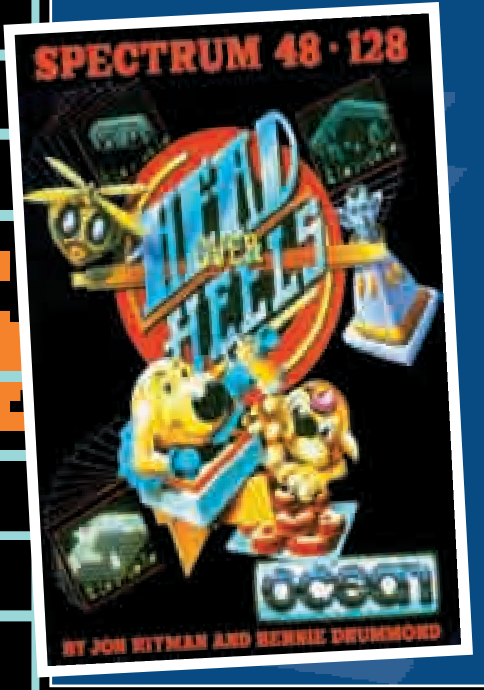
How easy was it setting up Cranberry Source?
Jon: Far too easy. If it had been harder I would have made a better job of it.

And how did you come up with the name?
Jon: A random comment when I said we needed something crazy like Cranberry Sauce. My business partner, John Cook, thought of the re-spelling and the name stuck.

What were your intentions behind Cranberry Source and do you think that the release of QAD harmed the company's future success?
Jon: The main problems at Cranberry Source were the changes in the market and the pressure it put on the company

How did working for Rare come about?
Bernie: When Rare first advertised for work we heard a rumour that they were Ultimate. So Jon phoned them hoping that if they were Ultimate they would understand who we were. He phoned them up and said: "I hear you're looking for programmers". The reply was: "Ah, Jon Ritman, you're the first name on our list". They encouraged us to come down and do what we liked – they gave us freedom, time and plenty of space to create something.

Which of your games is your favourite?
Jon: To play, *Super Match Soccer* – bloody good soccer game that relies on the skill of the players and not on computer aid – it makes a two-player game very challenging. Otherwise, *Monster Max* – it took the isometric game one stage further.
Bernie: *Head Over Heels* was like making a dress out of silk, it didn't matter if the dress was rubbish as you were using that silk. We'd already had a dry run with *Bat Man* and soon had everybody trying to reproduce it (we later learned that Ultimate was really impressed with it), so *Bat Man* felt like luxury. The experience was like having already won the FA cup rather than struggling to do something we'd never achieved before.



HEAD OVER HEELS

Originally known as the rural-sounding *Foot And Mouth*, *Head Over Heels* is seen by many as Jon and Bernie's greatest achievement. "When we started on *Head Over Heels*, we knew we weren't fighting for a new niche in the market and that we could simply concentrate on making it plush," Bernie recalls. And very plush it was too. It was twice the size of *Bat Man*, had more refined visuals and had the genius addition of two characters who not only had their own abilities (Head could fly, Heels was fast and could jump), but could also join together to solve puzzles. "It's strange how the use of two characters was hailed as a creative masterstroke," says Ritman. "At the time I just thought of it as a way to give slightly more complex puzzles".

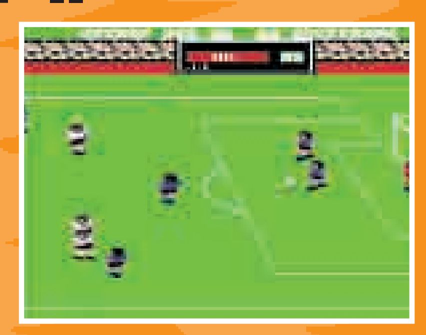
Starting in separate prison cells, your first task was to join Head and Heels together. After that it was simply a case of escaping the prison of planet Blacktooth and going on to save four imprisoned worlds. Egyptus, Book World, Safari and Penitentiary were all huge locations where the intrepid duo searched for each world's crown. *Head Over Heels'* best aspect, however, was its overall surrealism; rabbits fell from the sky to grant extra lives and other abilities, doughnuts were used as ammunition, and then you had the odd couple themselves…



▶ *Head Over Heels* was a huge success for Ritman and Drummond, and one of their best-looking titles.

MATCH DAY II

After the success of *Match Day*, it was inevitable that there would be a sequel – *Match Day II* was the result and improved on the original in every way. The first thing you noticed was the game's improved visuals. "Bernie made a much better job of the graphics than I had in the earlier version," recalls Ritman. Players were a lot more compact and had a similar chunky style to both *Bat Man* and *Head Over Heels* – "but effectively they were like that because we had watched football games where the ball would bounce of the edge of a [sprite] box, before it got anywhere near the actual drawing," explains Drummond.







The resized visuals allowed for even greater realism than before and were lapped up by an adoring public. Ritman had also gone back to the core of the game to offer even more of the football experience that fans of the original craved. Controllable kicks, an important back pass feature and the ability for two players to team up against the computer ensured that *Match Day*'s sequel was a more than worthy follow-up to its illustrious predecessor.

One problem with the original *Match Day* was the conversions it had received – "the versions for the BBC, C64 and Amstrad CPC were programmed by others who didn't even talk to me about it – I thought the versions were dire," laments Ritman. The sequel received rather better treatment. "I can remember spending over a day on the phone with me single stepping [a debugging term] through the Z80 code while the 6502 programmer did the same at his end with the C64 translation," says Ritman. As a result, even more gamers got to experience the genius of *Match Day II*.

How do you feel about the current videogames industry?

Jon: Hamstrung by the cost of producing each game it dare not take chances and has to make nearly every game multiplatform, therefore working to the lowest common denominator – look how the N64 and Cube games are much better due to the single platform.

Bernie: It must be like getting picked for your club at 17 and playing for Manchester United, whereas when me and Jon made games it was like trying to get into the World Cup when you were Maori, it was that hard trying to make a Spectrum look like an arcade machine. If you can work for a company now that's got almost unlimited funds you could pretty much do anything; I'm sure that if Jon and myself worked for the people who made *Tomb Raider*, it would be four times as good, but unfortunately we don't.

What are you working on at the moment?

Jon: Doing some planning and thinking about small platforms such as the GBA. We were working on a cool 3D engine, but that's currently on hold and I'm now looking at texture mapping and lit poly engines. It's still in very early stages so there isn't a lot more I can tell you.

What happened to the arcade version of Match Day *you had planned for Rare?*

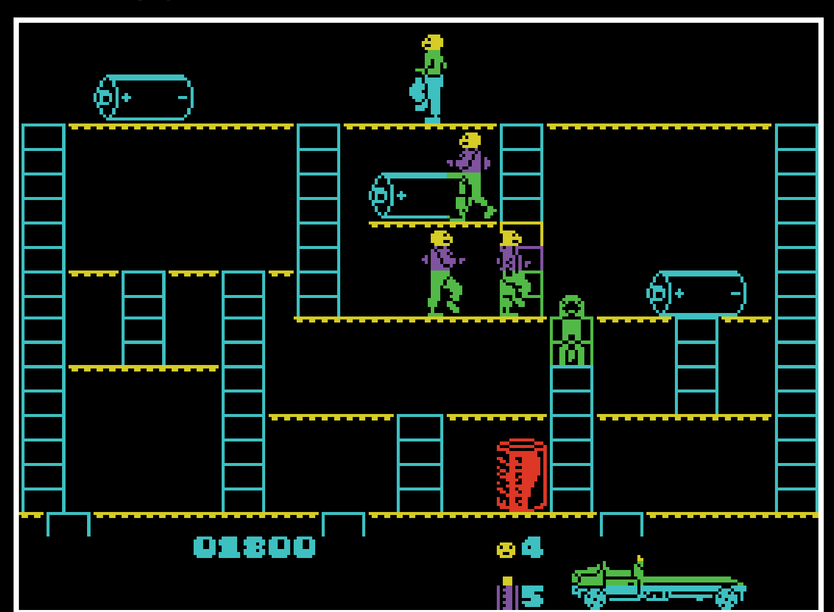
Jon: We finished the game and put it out in some test sites where, by chance, another arcade soccer game was being tested – they wiped the floor with us. On reflection I would say that I made some great home soccer games but the reason they worked so well was because of their depth and the length of the learning curve – there was always another trick to master. An arcade game needs to be easy to learn and be brilliant at on the very first play otherwise the player will not put another coin in the slot.

Bernie: Rare put out a half-finished version on display in an arcade in America and it was up against a *FIFA*-like game where you only had to knock the ball into the back of the net. It wasn't as good but ended up taking more money than ours.

Surely a GBA version of Head Over Heels *would be a great idea?*

Jon: *Head Over Heels*' copyright is held by others and I don't want to be held back by them.

▼ Not only would those batteries power your car, but you could drop them onto Bovver Bears and foil their furry plans.





CLASSIC CONSOLES BUYERS GUIDE

I'D BUY THAT FOR A DOLLAR

This is a basic list of the sort of prices you can expect to pay for the more popular retro gaming systems. Obviously, these can vary wildly but this is intended to be a rough guideline so you can tell if you're getting a bargain or being unscrupulously fleeced.

3DO

Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60

ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£50

ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£35 (the original model costs less)
Atari Jaguar	£25

COMMODORE

Commodore Vic 20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (varies according to model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (varies according to model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£200-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (varies according to model)

NEC

PC Engine	£70-80
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£100-150
PC Engine GT	£150-200
Super Grafx	£200-250

NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-50 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-25
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20
Mega Drive	£20-25
Game Gear	£35-40
Mega CD	£40-60
SEGA 32X	£30
SEGA Nomad	£75-100
SEGA Saturn	£30
Dreamcast	£25-30

SINCLAIR

Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

SNK

Neo Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system)	£70 (prices for multi-slots are higher)
Neo Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo Geo CD	£125-175
Neo Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo Geo Pocket Color	£40-50

SYSTEMS UP CLOSE



SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

£20-£25 (boxed)

THREE OF THE BEST

Street Fighter II Turbo – Est. Price: £8
Super Mario Kart – Est. Price: £20
Super Mario World – Est. Price: £5

For many, the SNES is still the greatest console of all time. With Nintendo titles such as *PilotWings* and *Zelda: A Link To The Past*, and third-party offerings like *Street Fighter II Turbo* and *The Secret Of Mana*, the Super Nintendo boasted an extremely impressive line-up of games. These days you can get hold of system, a second controller and enough games to keep you going indefinitely for around £50.



PANASONIC 3DO

£60

THREE OF THE BEST

The Need For Speed – Est. Price: £10
Road Rash – Est. Price: £10
Return Fire – Est. Price: £8

Though hardly blessed with the greatest games in the world, the Panasonic 3DO Interactive Multiplayer (snappy name) is almost worth £60 just so you can have a laugh at its expense… and your own, of course. Although a few excellent titles are available, the 3DO has some of the worst games ever made. *Phoenix 3*, *Way Of The Warrior* and *Station Invasion* are all hilarious, and *Road Race* on the sampler CD defies words.



Buy & sell your retro games with games™

WANTED

Wanted 02 – ***King Of Fighters Dream Match 1999*** (Jap) for Dreamcast. Must include box and manual **Bournemouth**

Wanted 03 – ***StarLancer*** (PAL) for SEGA Dreamcast. Must include box and manual **Bournemouth**

Wanted 05 – ***Garou: Mark Of The Wolves*** for Neo-Geo AES. Must include box and manual **Poole**

Wanted 06 – ***Capcom CPSII arcade PCBs***. Any considered **Poole**

Wanted 07 – ***King Of Fighters '98*** (English) for Neo-Geo AES. Must be in good working order complete with box and manual **Exeter**

Wanted 08 – ***King Of Fighters 2000*** (English) for Neo-Geo AES. Must be in good working order and complete with box and manual **Exeter**

Wanted 12 – **Azure Dreams** for Sony PSone. Must have box and instructions **Manchester**

Wanted 09 – ***Last Resort*** for Neo-Geo AES. Must be in good working order and complete with box and manual **Exeter**

Wanted 10 – ***Miracle Piano*** teaching cartridge for NES (UK version). Must be in good working order **Suffolk**

Wanted 11 – **Dragon(s) Crystal** for SEGA Game Gear. Preferably with box and instructions **Manchester**

Wanted 13 – **Vandal Hearts** for Sony Playstation. Must have box and instructions **Manchester**

Wanted 14 – **Panzer Dragoon Saga** for SEGA Saturn. Must have box and instructions **Manchester**

Wanted 15 – **Panzer Dragoon Mini** for SEGA Game Gear. Preferably with box and instructions **Poole**

Wanted 16 – **Bomberman compatible Multi-tap** for SEGA Mega Drive **Bournemouth**

ITEMS FOR SALE

Lot 10 – ***Metal Slug 3*** (English) for Neo-Geo AES. Includes box and manual, mint condition **£100 plus p+p** Exeter

Lot 11 – ***Jet Pac*** for Spectrum. Boxed with instructions, good condition **£1 plus p+p, or buyer collects** North Yorks

Lot 12 – ***Lord Of The Rings*** for Spectrum. Boxed with instructions, good condition **£2.50 plus p+p, or buyer collects** North Yorks

Lot 13 – **Amstrad GX4000 Console**, 2 control pads, *Burnin' Rubber* game, PSU & RF Lead. Boxed with instructions and all documents, near mint condition **£40 including p+p** Oxon

Lot 14 – ***Ecco The Dolphin*** (UK version) for SEGA Mega Drive. Boxed with instructions, good condition **£4 plus p+p, or buyer collects** North Yorks

Lot 15 – ***Micro Machines 2 – Turbo Tournament*** (UK version) for SEGA Mega Drive. Boxed with instructions, good condition **£4 plus p+p, or buyer collects** North Yorks

Lot 16 – ***Gunstar Heroes*** (UK version) for SEGA Mega Drive. Boxed and instructions, good condition **£10 plus p+p** North Yorks

Lot 17 – **Neo-Geo Pocket Colour** (blue camouflage) with ***Puzzle Bobble***. Boxed and instructions, excellent condition, barely used **£50** Newcastle Upon Tyne

SELLING
To sell items on gBay, simply list the following details in an email to: gbay@paragon.co.uk

- Your name
- Your age (you must be over 18)
- Your home address and telephone number (don't worry – this is strictly confidential and will not be given out)
- Your email address
- The item(s) you wish to sell (a maximum of five per month please)
- The condition of the item(s) you wish to sell
- How much you want for the item(s)

Each item will then be allocated a lot number and listed on gBay, along with your region in the UK.

BUYING
To buy an item from gBay, all you have to do is list the following details in an email to: gbay@paragon.co.uk

- Your name
- Your age (you must be over 18)
- Your home address and telephone number (don't worry – this is strictly confidential and will not be given out)
- Your email address
- The reference number for the item you're interested in

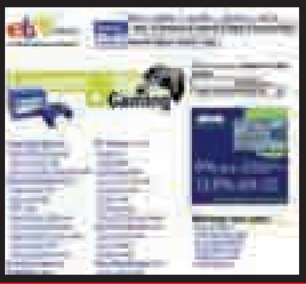
WANTED
If you're simply trying to get hold of a long-desired item, contact us in the same way as above stating what you want and any preferences on its condition or price.

After contacting us, your email address will be passed onto the relevant seller or buyer, who will contact you directly to complete the deal, arrange payment and make plans for postage, collection or delivery. Please note that this runs purely on a first come, first served basis.

GBAY RULES AND SMALL PRINT
This is a service for private sellers, not dealers. gBay is for sales of retro games only – no post-Dreamcast consoles or games allowed. There's little point in advertising Mega Drive *FIFA* games as everybody already has at least two copies. Paragon Publishing Ltd cannot take any responsibility for items lost or broken in the post

EBAY: THE UK'S ONLINE MARKETPLACE





Where can I find it? Online
Web Address: www.ebay.co.uk
What can I buy there? Pretty much anything. Theoretically, you should eventually be able to find just about every game-related item ever made, providing you don't mind waiting for it, of course.

In case you've never heard of it (which is unlikely), eBay was founded in 1995 and is now the world's largest online trading community. The site works like a regular auction room – items are listed for ten days and bids can be placed at any point during that period. But first you'll need to register…

JOINING EBAY

The eBay registration process is designed to be as user-friendly as possible. All you need to do is click on the option at the top of the screen and enter your name, address and email address. You'll then have to create a user identity and password, and may also be asked to input your bank details to verify that all your information is true (this usually depends on which email service you're using). You will then be sent a confirmation email within 24 hours.

SEARCHING FOR AN ITEM

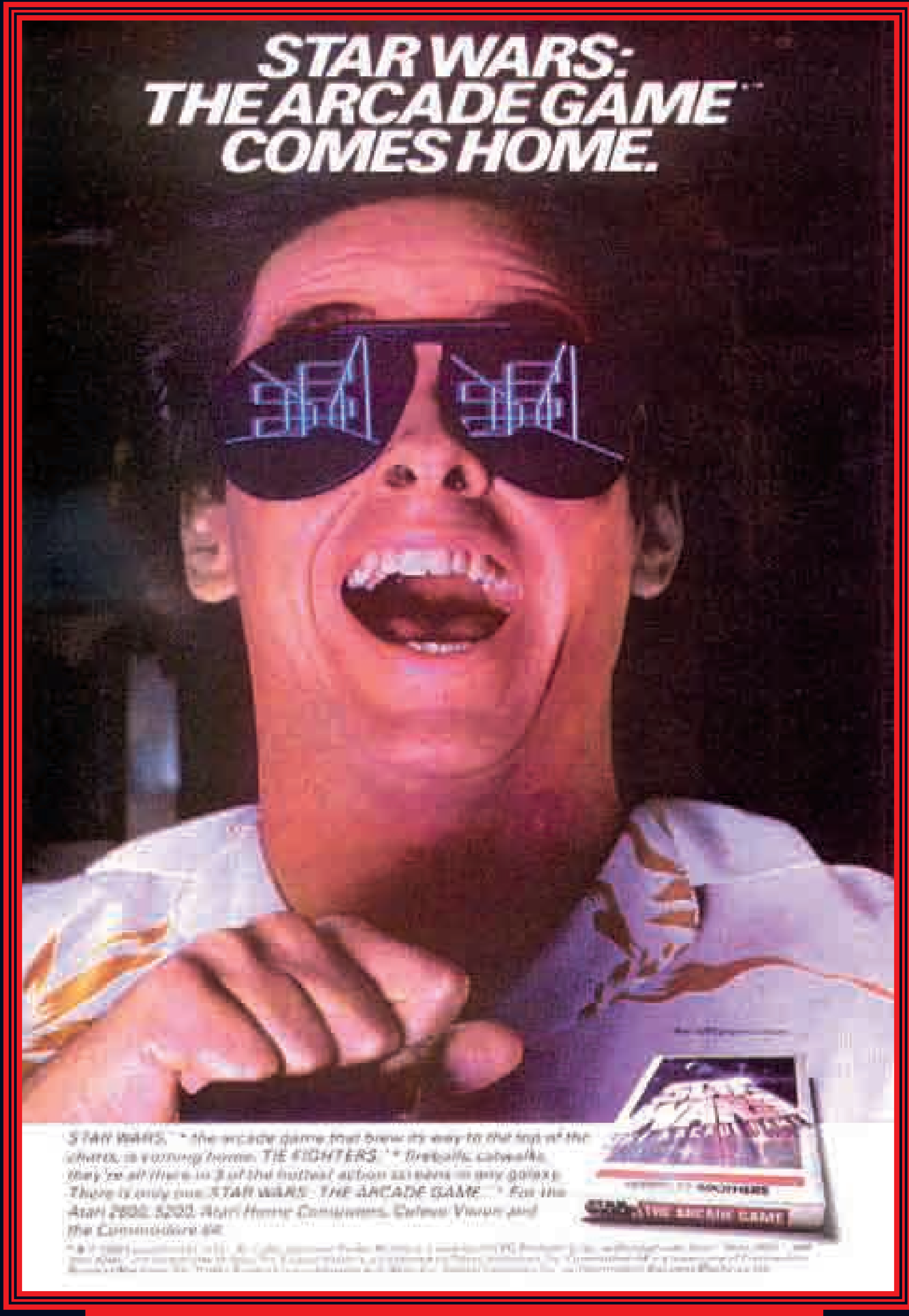
There are two simple methods of searching for items on ebay. The first is looking for groups of items (SNES games, for example) – simply click on the 'Computer & Video Gaming' link on the homepage then select your desired format from the list. Or you can type the specific title of the game or product you're looking for in the 'what are you looking for?' box and eBay will list any current items that match your search.

MAKING A BID

If you find something you'd like to buy, you can make a bid by selecting the 'bid' option on the left-hand side of the screen. You'll be asked for your user ID and password, before specifying how much you wish to bid. You can either place a bid just above the current asking price, or simply state the maximum you'd like to pay and eBay will automatically bid on your behalf until you either win the item or the price goes higher than your maximum bid.

WINNING AN AUCTION

If you win the auction, you'll need to contact the seller to arrange payment, as well as collection or delivery. The item's description will usually specify how much postage will cost, as well as which methods of payment the seller accepts. It's up to you to make sure that you reach an agreement that suits both parties.



STAR WARS: THE ARCADE GAME (Atari 2600 & 5200, Coleco Vision, C64, Atari Home Computers) Parker Brothers, 1983


eMag

ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

PLAYSTATION2

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Sony

UK LAUNCH DATE
24 November 2000

MEDIA
4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£169.99

The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.

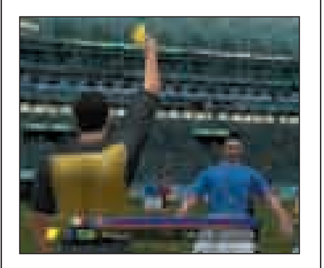




TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

No.	Title		Publisher	Developer
1	Ico		SCEE	In-House
2	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City		Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
3	TimeSplitters 2		Eidos	Free Radical
4	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4		Activision	Neversoft
5	Pro Evolution Soccer 2		Konami	In-House
6	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact		Acclaim	Criterion
7	Dark Chronicle		Sony	In-House
8	Rez		SEGA	UGA
9	Amplitude	IMPORT	Sony	Harmonix
10	Devil May Cry		Capcom	In-House
11	Suikoden III	IMPORT	Konami	In-House
12	NBA Street 2		Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG
13	Kingdom Hearts		SCEE	Squaresoft
14	Colin McRae Rally 3		Codemasters	In-House
15	Wild Arms 3		Ubi Soft	Media Vision
16	Ape Escape 2		Sony	In-House
17	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin		Eidos	Io Interactive
18	Project Zero		Wanadoo	Tecmo
19	Capcom VS SNK 2		Capcom	In-House
20	Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution		SEGA	AM2

VIEWPOINT
WINNING ELEVEN 6: FE
With *Winning Eleven 7* just around the corner (complete with the oh-so-attractive promise of online play), it's only natural that we've spent our spare time sharpening up our ball skills in readiness for the inevitable trouncing we'll get once the Japanese take us on…



VIEWPOINT
ARMORED CORE 3
Mecha fans rejoice – while you might shunned by the rest of society, you can at least be safe in the knowledge that *Armored Core 3* is the *Gran Turismo* of mecha games. If only Metro3D hadn't ripped out the iLink mode, everyone would be happy.

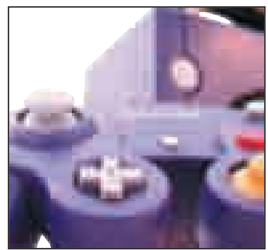


VIEWPOINT
VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION
Sure, you might be a bit miffed at the idea of having to buy a game that's virtually identical to the one that was out last year, but you'll have to if you want the definitive version of SEGA's realistic beat-'em-up. Never mind, eh?



VIEWPOINT
EYETOY: PLAY
Cheap but cheerful – that's probably the best way to describe the selection of games that come with Sony's latest gadget, the EyeToy. Grab some mates for some window-washing, ninja-punching, ball-juggling fun and you'll be unable to stop yourself…






GAMECUBE

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Nintendo

UK LAUNCH DATE
3 May 2002

MEDIA
3-inch Optical Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£129.99

Though the GameCube seems destined to struggle, Nintendo's box of delights is still worth a look. Admittedly, third-party support is rapidly dwindling, but you only have to look at the first-party releases to appreciate the quality gaming on offer – Nintendo still makes some of the finest games you'll ever play and missing out on them isn't an option.



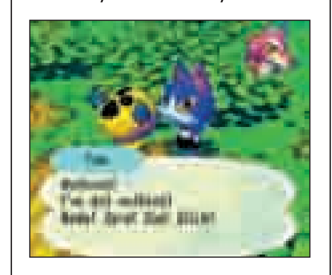
TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Metroid Prime	Nintendo	In-House
2	The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	In-House
3	Winning Eleven 6: Final Evolution IMPORT	Konami	In-House
4	Super Monkey Ball 2	SEGA	Amusement Vision
5	TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical
6	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	In-House
7	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft
8	Ikaruga	Treasure	In-House
9	Super Mario Sunshine	Nintendo	In-House
10	Animal Crossing IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House
11	Eternal Darkness	Nintendo	Silicon Knights
12	Soul Calibur II IMPORT	Namco	In-House
13	Resident Evil	Capcom	In-House
14	Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	In-House
15	Mario Party 4	Nintendo	Hudson
16	Mr Driller: Drill Land IMPORT	Namco	In-House
17	Skies Of Arcadia Legends IMPORT	SEGA	Overworks
18	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	In-House
19	Star Wars: Rogue Leader	Activision	Factor 5
20	Sonic Mega Collection	SEGA	Sonic Team

VIEWPOINT
DEF JAM VENDETTA
Put your beliefs about wrestling to one side for a minute and ask yourself this – if there was a really playable beat-'em-up packed with moves, characters and the chance to play with up to three friends, wouldn't you buy it? Exactly. So what are you waiting for?



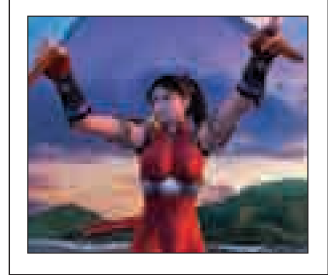
VIEWPOINT
ANIMAL CROSSING
Damn you, Nintendo – it's been nearly a year now and we're still religiously plugging away at making our towns the best places to live on the planet. Why won't you just leave us in peace, rather than releasing more of those must-buy e-Cards? Why?



VIEWPOINT
SPLINTER CELL
It's taken absolutely ages for it to arrive, but finally you can now experience Sam Fisher's exciting adventures on your trusty GameCube. It's just as good as before – plus you can link up your GBA and get the advantage over your enemies. Good solid fun.



VIEWPOINT
SOUL CALIBUR II
Still? Well, yes – despite having attempted to move on to greater things, there's still nothing we enjoy more than a quick blast of the frantic button-mashing action that *Soul Calibur II* has to offer. And to think – it's still not out over here for another five months…



ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

XBOX

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Microsoft

UK LAUNCH DATE
13 March 2002

MEDIA
4.75-inch DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£129.99

Despite a slow start, the Xbox is swiftly becoming one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to the casual gamer than most PCs.

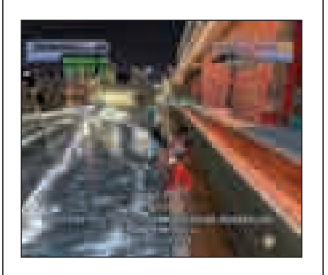




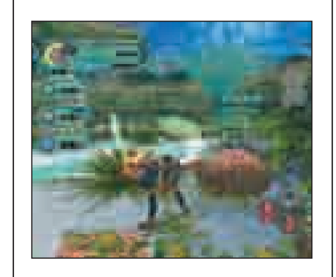
TOP TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Halo	Microsoft	Bungie
2	Panzer Dragoon Orta	SEGA	Smilebit
3	Jet Set Radio Future	SEGA	Smilebit
4	TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical
5	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	In-House
6	Project Gotham Racing	Microsoft	Bizarre Creations
7	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Activision	Neversoft
8	Project Zero	Microsoft	Tecmo
9	Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	Criterion Studios
10	Dead Or Alive 3	Microsoft	Tecmo
11	Soul Calibur II IMPORT	Namco	In-House
12	Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	Shaba Games
13	Moto GP	THQ	Climax
14	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Io Interactive
15	Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	Z-Axis
16	Quantum Redshift	Microsoft	Curly Monsters
17	Colin McRae Rally 3	CodeMasters	In-House
18	Tiger Woods 2003	EA	In-House
19	Buffy The Vampire Slayer	EA	In-House
20	Return To Castle Wolfenstein: Tides Of War	Activision	id Software

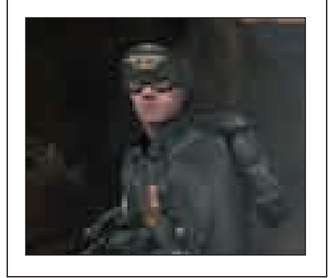
VIEWPOINT
WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED
Good lord, could we have found a decent extreme sports game that doesn't feature Tony Hawk? It certainly looks that way. Shaba's cracking attempt at turning wakeboarding into a videogame is definitely worth your attention.



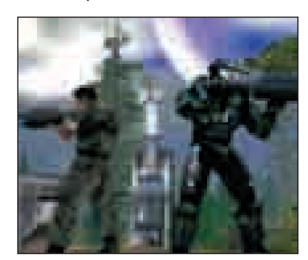
VIEWPOINT
PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP I&II
While we stick by our argument that the lacklustre gameplay is disappointing, the fact that you can now talk with the people on your team through the Xbox communicator makes this a good addition to the Live catalogue.



VIEWPOINT
RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: TOW
While shooting German soldiers at point-blank range might not seem like fun, take it online and it's an entirely different kettle of Nazi fish. One question though: why does everyone only want to play as the Allies?



VIEWPOINT
HALO
Even though we thought such a thing didn't exist, we managed to find a small handful of people that (shock horror) didn't like *Halo*. So back to the game we went, in an effort to teach them why it's such fun to play in Co-Op mode – and now they won't let us on it. Damn.











GBA

DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
Nintendo

UK LAUNCH DATE
22 June 2001

MEDIA
Flash Cartridge

CURRENT PRICE
£69.99



Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely new SP model is available now.

TOP TEN MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Advance Wars	Nintendo	In-House
2	Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords	Nintendo	In-House
3	Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo	In-House
4	Golden Sun: The Lost Age IMPORT	Nintendo	Camelot
5	Metroid Fusion	Nintendo	In-House
6	Street Fighter Alpha 3	Ubi Soft	Crawfish
7	Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow	Konami	In-House
8	Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
9	Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	In-House
10	Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe	Wanadoo	Crawfish

VIEWPOINT
ADVANCE WARS

With the number one **games™** office rule now being 'own *Advance Wars* or you're fired', it's obligatory for at least one of us to be playing it at any given time…



VIEWPOINT
GOLDEN SUN: THE LOST AGE

A must-have game, whether you've played the first game or not. Of course, if you haven't then it's a perfect reason to do so…



PC

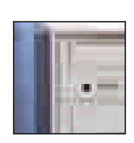
DETAILS

MANUFACTURER
N/A

UK LAUNCH DATE
N/A

MEDIA
4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc

CURRENT PRICE
£variable



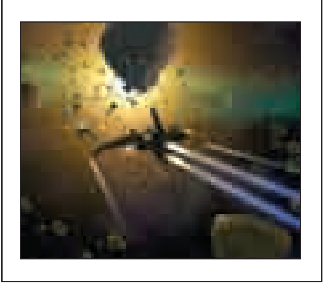
While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it is perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

TOP TEN MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

No.	Title	Publisher	Developer
1	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
2	Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	Digital Extremes
3	Championship Manager 4	Eidos	Sports Interactive
4	Operation: Flashpoint	Codemasters	In-House
5	Rise Of Nations	Microsoft	Big Huge Games
6	Freelancer	Microsoft	Digital Anvil
7	Half-Life	Vivendi	Valve Software
8	The Sims	EA	Maxis
9	Age Of Mythology	Microsoft	Ensemble Studios
10	Sam And Max Hit The Road	Activision	LucasArts

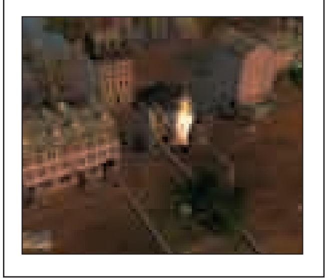
VIEWPOINT
FREELANCER

Go anywhere, do anything – that's the *Freelancer* way. We've been playing it solidly and still keep finding new and exciting things to steal from unsuspecting players…



VIEWPOINT
WWII: FRONTLINE COMMAND

War simulations are ten-a-penny these days, but they really don't come much better than the Bitmap Brothers' latest effort.



PERIPHERALS

THEY MAY NOT BE EVERYONE'S CUP OF TEA, BUT EACH CONSOLE HAS ITS OWN MUST-HAVE PERIPHERALS – THOSE LITTLE EXTRAS THAT MAKE THE GAMING EXPERIENCE ALL THE MORE PLEASURABLE. CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THESE?

REEBOK CYBERRIDER

DETAILS

CONSOLE
PS2, PSone, PC

FROM
Reebok

CURRENT PRICE
£300

AVAILABLE
Now

If you think you need to get more exercise but can't drag yourself away from your games, then Reebok has the answer for you – and it's not a course of psychological therapy. Essentially, the CyberRider is a piece of fitness equipment that doubles as a controller for your PS2, PSone or PC. Using its pedals to replace the analogue acceleration controls on the pad, and buttons on the handlebars for the other controls, you can play all manner of racing games and get a workout at the same time. We'll admit we were sceptical about how well it would work – especially considering there aren't any games designed specifically for it – but it does the job of combining exercise and gaming rather well and is an essential purchase for anyone looking to get fit while enjoying their favourite pastime. Of course, whether that justifies the hefty price tag is another matter altogether.



EYE TOY

DETAILS

CONSOLE
PlayStation2

FROM
Sony

CURRENT PRICE
£39.99

AVAILABLE
Now

Okay, so we weren't too enamoured with the concept when Sony first announced the EyeToy, but we're swiftly warming to the idea now that we've got one of our own. Admittedly, the games that come bundled with it (on a disc imaginatively called *EyeToy: Play*) are little more than a distraction when you're on your own. Get a bunch of friends round though, and it's a completely different story – in particular, *Kung Foo* kept us entertained for many an hour, just through laughing at each other's pitiful attempts to punch ninjas and break boards with our bare hands. Most importantly, the games demonstrate the huge potential that the EyeToy has, if only developers will take advantage of it. Beat-'em-ups that sense your movements or dancing games when you really do have to have rhythm to do well sound like a good idea to us – here's hoping the EyeToy gets the support it deserves.



USB/SP RECHARGE CABLE

DETAILS

CONSOLE
Game Boy Advance

FROM
JOYTECH

CURRENT PRICE
£5.99

AVAILABLE
Now

Cables. Not exactly the first thing that springs to mind when you think about new and innovative peripherals, being as they are rather limited and, well, cable-like. Still, every so often someone comes up with a clever idea that manages to make us sit up and take notice – like this USB/SP recharge cable, a cheap-but-cheerful alternative to using a plug socket. Basically, it allows you to bring your Game Boy Advance SP back to life without having to cart the clunky recharging plug around with you – a godsend, especially if you're always on the move. Just plug the cable into an active USB port (PC, Mac or even PlayStation2, it doesn't matter) and Robert's your mother's brother – a fully charged GBA SP in around three hours. Plus it means you can save a little bit on your electricity bill too, which is always a plus point.



USB SAMPLER

DETAILS

CONSOLE
PlayStation2

FROM
Jester Interactive

CURRENT PRICE
£19.99

AVAILABLE
Now

Anyone with a taste for musical wizardry will know that the *Music* series on the PSone (and now PS2) is the most accomplished of its kind on the market, short of owning a PC and over £1,000 worth of software. However, sometimes even a wealth of musical samples and styles just isn't enough – to really take things to the next level, you want to create your own tunes. Enter then the Jester USB sampler and microphone; an add-on peripheral to *Music 3000* on the PS2 that was originally meant to be packaged with the game (hence its small but perfectly formed design). Connect the sampler to the PS2 and you can use the microphone to record your own vocals, or the line-in socket to link a keyboard, guitar or other instrument for some original licks. Looks like you'll never need another music program ever again…


eMag

MEDAL OF HONOR
RISING SUN

Welcome to the jungle – it's time to go to war, Vietnam style. games™ heads out to sunny San Francisco, ready to go tooth and nail with everything that EA's latest war epic has to offer…

NEXT MONTH IN games™

Damn you, summer – although we'll admit it's nice to sit in the sunshine, we're anticipating great things once autumn rolls around. With that in mind, next issue proves there's lots to look forward to…

MORE… PREVIEWS

Believe it or not, but Christmas is comng, which means plenty of games to look forward to. With E3 now a distant memory, new info is starting to trickle through – and we've got it, just for you.



MORE… REVIEWS

Finally, those games that we thought would have been here months ago are beginning to arrive. We'll be looking at what little there is to get you hot under the collar as the summer drags on…



MORE… FEATURES

If music be the food of love, play on – or so they say, anyway. When it comes to videogames though, does music really make a difference? games™ puts on its dancing shoes to find out.



ON



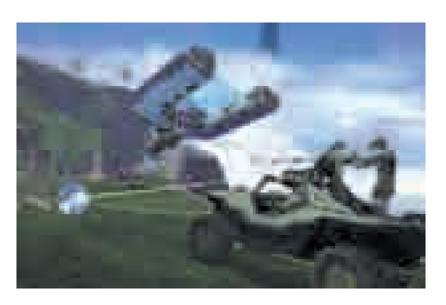
So, that'll be Issue 9 then – once we've managed to recover from all the overseas visits and developer trips we've got planned, that is. Better go out and enjoy the sunshine while it lasts…

SALE 14 AUGUST 03

CONTACT
ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

THE EFFECTS OF PIRACY, ACCLAIM JUMPING NINTENDO'S SHIP – ALL THIS AND THE HOPE THAT VIDEOGAMES MIGHT BECOME SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST ENTERTAINMENT.

When it isn't all about the perceived demise of Nintendo, it's the evils of Microsoft and fears about the future of consoles.



MAKING CONTACT

There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with games™. The traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:

games™
Paragon Publishing Ltd
Paragon House
St Peter's Road
Bournemouth
BH1 2JS

However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the Internet. Email us at this address: **gamestm@paragon.co.uk**

Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum? Here you should be shielded from multiple spams and infantile remarks. Access to the site has been password protected and only those of you who have bought this issue of **games™** will be able to get onto the site – and if you have bought this magazine then you're not the sort to be abusive and childish, are you? Follow these quick steps to getting on the **games™** forum and enjoy hassle-free chatting with those of us who share a passion for gaming.

Step One:
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, so we're sure you'll think of something.

Step Two:
Type the following into the Net browser window: **www.totalgames.net**
You will arrive at the Totalgames website. From here click on the forum icon. News users will have to register via the 'new user' icon – it's a simple step-by-step process which we're sure you can manage.

Step Three:
Once registered, click on the **games™** forum icon. You'll need the password, and that's '**checked**'. Then a whole world of sophisticated wit and games chat will be yours. It says here.

YOUR 'GOODBYE MR. Chips' article really interested me as I am studying games design at university, and piracy is a criminal act that will affect me if I do decide to go into the gaming industry. The thing that really sticks out is the lack of any articles about Sony getting tough on piracy. Both Microsoft and Nintendo seem to have taken a strong stance against piracy, even SEGA tried with the Dreamcast. Not a peep from Sony about what it is trying to do to stop piracy though, yet the PS2 seems to be the easiest machine to chip and get pirate games for. If you go to my local boot sale many of the stalls will have pirated PS2 games available, and nothing seems to be getting done about it. Maybe it's in Sony's interests – maybe it's why the PS2 is the most popular format.

Also, to anybody that actually buys pirated games, what are you thinking? Is it that games are overpriced? Well, yes they are, but also a lot of time and effort goes into developing a game. The money that companies make goes back into the industry to make bigger, better games. If you actually think that buying pirated games is a good way of making a stand against the industry you're only really shooting yourself in the foot. The less money that goes back into gaming, the less great games we are going to see, making more gaming companies go bust.

The next time you hand over a fiver to that happy-looking chap at the boot sale please note that he's only smiling because that's another easy buck for him, not the industry. Do you think he cares about gaming? He most likely has never picked up a control pad in his life. Once the gaming industry crashes, he'll be off making an easy buck off the next big thing.
Dan Atkins

games™: It's quite possible that Sony is taking plenty of measures against piracy, it's just that Nintendo and Microsoft have announced fairly high-profile anti-piracy measures recently. But it's certainly an issue we'll be examining in more depth in the future.

UP UNTIL THE next generation consoles were launched, I was always against the idea of a single format console. However, now that Nintendo is lagging far behind the others in terms of sales of its GameCube, I'm not so sure. I don't believe enough people get to play games like *Wind Waker*, *Metroid* and *Mario Sunshine* because they are not prepared to buy a GameCube for the privilege to do so. Therefore, many people are missing out on the great games Nintendo has to offer. These games deserve to be played by the masses rather than rubbish like *Enter The Matrix*.

It therefore seems a good idea to have one console on which to play all games from *Halo* to *Mario*, *Zelda*, *Grand Theft Auto*, *Sonic* and so on. A single console could also offer a great range of retro games including old SNES and Mega Drive classics which are currently helping to sell the Game Boy Advance.

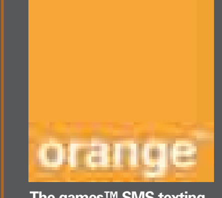
It would be great to see all three big players team up and offer the ultimate console, with Nintendo offering the innovation, Sony providing the marketing and mass audience and Microsoft supplying the cash. Well, I can dream I guess.
Graham Tarrant

games™: The idea of having just one format is pretty appealing for the reasons you mention, but do you not think that having more than one

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It's games such as *Turok Evolution* that have tarnished Acclaim's reputation.

format ensures that the first-party developers have to push that little bit harder to innovate and outdo their rivals? From the consumer's perspective, such rivalry can only be a good thing, and having just one console to play on might become a little dull…

☐ **THE GAMES INDUSTRY** happily stirs up a bit of controversy over any big game that pushes the boundaries for taste and decency. But in the world of the videogame it seems like controversy is simply a synonym for violence. Of course baseball-batting a prostitute is good *Daily Mail* column-inch grabbing, unit-selling fare, but I think it's about time we demanded more than just the endless round of tabloid baiting and asked for something a little more, well, controversial.

While films and books will always have an element of trash, both these media have pushed their respective envelopes further and created controversy not just because of their portrayal of bloodshed, but the presentation of ideas or concepts at odds with mainstream society. Back in the world of games, think back to every release you've played over the last five years. Have any of them made you change the way you live your life, made you seek a new career, or worship a different god? Probably not, but books (and to a lesser extent films) can, and do, change society in this way.

Which seems curious, considering games have a great advantage over other media types. Games can be both non-interactive and interactive, with most gamers tolerant of even skewed mixes of the two (take *MGS2* for example, heavily non-interactive but a top seller nonetheless). But gaming has been around as an entertainment media for well over 20 years and still hasn't produced anything as groundbreaking as (for example) *Lolita*, *Don Quixote* or *The Dark*.

Deus Ex is good, but is it an astonishing study in power, fear, sexuality and religion, or staggeringly well-written and heartbreaking in every possible way? Not really. It certainly contains more intelligent commentary on society than many other games released recently, but ironically its complex game goals and storyline dilute it as a work with a recognisable 'message'.

What we need is a game that causes a storm like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (banned by the US Postal Service for its erotic scenes), or *Monty Python's Life Of Brian* (hounded out of cinemas across the world for its 'blasphemous' depiction of religion). So, jaded generation-X developers, instead of cramming an extra 30 trillion bump-mapped polygons into your next next-gen game engine, how about cramming some of those deep philosophical thoughts you used to have at 3.30 in the morning when you were ▷

"I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME WE DEMANDED MORE THAN JUST THE ENDLESS ROUND OF TABLOID BAITING AND ASKED FOR SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE, WELL, CONTROVERSIAL"

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

TEXT LIFE...

☐ There is a SEGA R360 still in use here in London. It's in the Trocadero centre in the west end. I hope that bit of info helps.
And our Retro Editor convinced us that he simply had to go to Spain to check out the 'last ever' R360. Git.

☐ I know this sounds stupid– but do you need a GBA for the game boy player?
No, you don't. But you'd be mad not to own one, surely?

☐ Do you think that platform games are going downhill? *Super Mario Sunshine* was disappointing, and nothing good since!
Nintendo promises 'something wonderful' for the next *Mario* outing.

☐ Finally got hold of issue 6. Ahhhhhh Robocod how I miss you. Will have 2 get old amiga 1200 running again now
That's the beauty of the DPS shots and retro section – there to remind you of the games that you enjoyed back in the day. Enjoy.

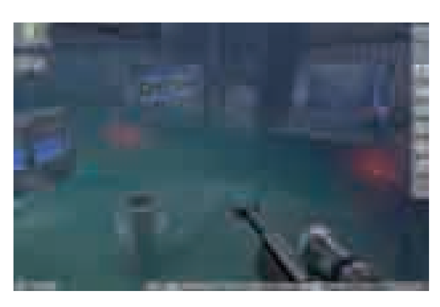
☐ DDRMAX is not 2Unlimited's game debut –gamesTM #6 – They actually wrote the soundtrack to a SNES game some years back, called…?
Yes, yes, *BioMetal*, very clever (mumble, mumble, grumble).

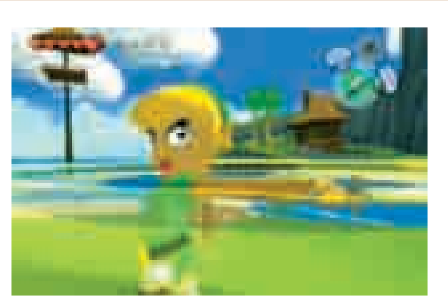
☐ Are we ever likely to see Ikaruga, Guilty Gear XX or any other DC games in the UK or are they forever denied to us? Import PS1games are bad enough, but DC too?
There will always be plenty of games that only get released in Japan, which more often than not is a good thing. However, *Ikaruga* is out now on the GameCube.

☐ UR mag is great! I love retro. ive 23 & av been gamin since d spectrum. so don't ever get rid of it! i hav a genuine good idea 4 a game who do I talk to?
Thanks for that. Why don't you send in your ideas (we assume none of them are *Typing Of The Dead*?) and we'll gladly look at them before you start calling developers.

☐ Sword of mana looks like a revamped seiken denetsu 1, rather than a new game.
That's good to know. Please send us any more of your observations.

☐ In issue 7, FF Crystal chronicles, u sed that its the 1st console multiplayer RPG since secret of mana. Ill prove you wrong, remember blaze & blade on the psx…
Clearly we don't/didn't…





lying drunk in your room at university?

Even though you 'just' produce games, maybe you can change the world after all. You won't know unless you try.
Ben Thomas

games™: Should videogames be more than just entertainment? Has the medium matured enough to try to change the way we think or feel? Your deeply philosophical thoughts on the matter are always welcome…

☐ **I LOVE VIDEOGAMES**, I really do. We all do, right? Else we wouldn't be here reading this. Since the age of ten I've spent every minute and penny on games. It's never mattered to me what format it was on, if it was good, I bought it. I started out by saying I loved videogames, well actually, I lied. You see, I'm 35 years old now and it looks like my party has been gate-crashed by an unwanted guest called Xbox.

Now don't get me wrong, I appreciate that the Xbox has the best specs of the 'big three', but it also comes from a company with no real passion for games, just apparently bottomless pockets that it wants to make even deeper. I know it's all about business, but just chucking money about because it can makes me feel sick. It's like the kid in the playground with the latest toy – he's popular but no one really likes him, he's just buying false friendship.

There sadly seems to be a bias in the industry too. A national games store chain gives Xbox the prime floor positions. Magazines (including yourselves) seem to be wording articles to favour the machine unfairly. **games™** issue 6 stated Nintendo is struggling, making profits last year of only $350 million, while the Xbox is doing great with losses of only $325 million out of a $46 billion reserve. Considering Nintendo's plight, I think this should be hailed as something of a success for the company. Every opportunity to emphasise that Nintendo is struggling is taken, thus providing Xbox assurance of second place and, before long, the top spot, no doubt.

This is not healthy for games and there is nothing that makes me want to buy an Xbox and I never will. I'll make my own decisions because I want to, not because Microsoft forces me to. When Microsoft starts giving them away free with boxes of cereals (because it can afford to) I'll throw mine away, thanks. If this is the future, then it looks like my 25-year party is over.
Peter Courtney

games™: We might think of Nintendo as a bit 'fluffier' than its rivals and a developer that produces a constant stream of stellar games but the reality is that, like Sony and like Microsoft, Nintendo is every bit as concerned with generating revenue. None of the 'big three' is a charity and each is determined to deliver the kinds

"THINK BACK TO EVERY RELEASE YOU'VE PLAYED OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS. HAVE ANY OF THEM EVER MADE YOU CHANGE THE WAY YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE?"


It might have looked nice but beneath the veneer it was a stinker. Bit like the movie, really.

of gaming experiences that will help to generate yet more cash. As someone who claims not to mind where your gaming pleasures originate, we think that your blinkered views are spoiling your fun rather than Bill Gates' foray into console manufacture.

SO, ONCE AGAIN another publisher has jumped the Nintendo ship. This time it's Acclaim that has dropped its support for the little purple dynamo after the current batch of games in the pipeline have been released. All in all, this seems a little cynical to me.

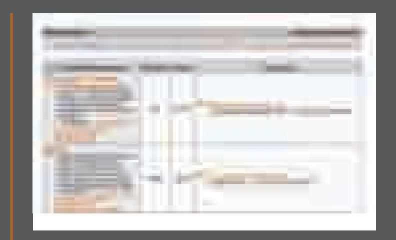
After very poor financial results, Acclaim seems to be using Nintendo as its scapegoat instead of looking at its output of decidedly lacklustre games, like the *Legends Of Wrestling* and *Turok* franchises. Wouldn't it be more prudent for Acclaim and also the consumer to admit that a lot of its recent releases have been below par, with an aim to improving their output, instead of heaping more doubt on the increasingly troubled Nintendo?
Mark Heery

games™: Administering a swift kick in Acclaim's direction seems to have become something of a sport of late, and not without some justification. However, it isn't just Acclaim that has released some duff games and, given that most of the **games™** team is utterly addicted to *Burnout 2*, we can at least point to one game that Acclaim has released that ought to be part of anyone's list of recently released gems – how many publishers can boast as much? It's also unfair to suggest that Acclaim is trying to make some point regarding the state of the GameCube – rather, it's reflecting the fact that most publishers are finding the going a little tough on Nintendo's current hardware. It's more likely that the ailing publisher cannot risk releasing games on the GameCube and, given its woes, is trying claw itself out of the mire that it finds itself in. You can't blame Acclaim for that.

I'D LIKE TO pass on a compliment as opposed to a rant or some thoughts. I only discovered **games™** at the *R-Type* issue but I need to say that I'm already converted. I've grown up playing games (I'm 27 and have had 22 years of playing) and, where possible, I've tried to be a multiformat machine owner. Since I owned a 128k Spectrum and a Master System, to save money I bought the only multiformat mag available at the time (I think everyone knows the title), but sadly whilst I have grown up this magazine has not.

Other multiformat titles have appeared but either got cancelled or were no different to the mag that I was already buying. Anyway, due to the lack of a decent multiformat mag I was forced to subscribe to that glossy toilet paper that believes that screenshots are more important than delivering an informative and interesting review, but thanks to the arrival of **games™** I will be cancelling that subscription and starting a new one. I also love the retro section and I hope it never goes away. So, top marks all round from a very happy reader.
Kev Clarke

games™: We try to avoid printing the letters and emails we get praising the mag, because if our heads got any bigger the chapeau shop would run out of sizes. But thanks to everyone who's taken the time out to thank us – your support means a great deal to us all.



FROM THE FORUM

They're dropping like flies… Are some genres on the way out?

4m3
25/06/03 04:55 PM
Does everyone share the same disappointment about the seemingly imminent demise of the classic game genres? Will developers be battling solely on the FPS/RTS front? And what about those who don't own keyboards? I'm concerned for the state of play. Does the gaming community want to see the beat-'em-up and shoot-'em-up disappear forever?

Number45
25/06/03 06:31 PM
If anything, I would have said that the traditional shooter seems to be having something of a revival at the moment. You've got *Ikaruga* on DC/GC, *R-Type Final* and *Gradius V* all due soon and *Psyvariar* on the PS2, although I'm not sure that will find its way out of Japan.

Fighters (I'm assuming you mean 2D, as there's not really a shortage of 3D fighters) seem to be running along at a steady pace, if nothing spectacular. *Guilty Gear* is still going, although rumoured to be going 3D, and Capcom is still developing games based around the S*treet Fighter* series and 2D engine.

In fact, there's a small resurgence in 'simple but deep' games anyway at the moment. The Capcom releases on the GC (*P.N.03* and *Viewtiful Joe* in particular), *Wario Ware/World* and *Metal Slug 3* on the PS2 all offer simple 'pick up and play' thrills yet plenty of depth in terms of the challenge of improved scores. See, it's not all bad.

Super Al
25/06/03 06:40 PM
I'm upset about the serious lack of point 'n' click games. The last one that I can remember was *The Curse Of Monkey Island* (*Monkey Island 3*). Although *Grim Fandango* and *Monkey Island 4* have a very similar style of play, the mouse click is just replaced by the cursor keys. Even they are in great shortage.

Number45
25/06/03 06:55 PM
Although, of course, we have sequels to both *Sam & Max* and *Full Throttle* across PC and Xbox to rectify those shortages. Not exactly the same by any means, but the puzzle style should be much the same.

Super Al
25/06/03 07:00 PM
The death of some genres has been for the better, like the text adventures from the days of the C64. I suppose they could be classed as primitive form of a point 'n' click style game, but they were absolutely dire

RetroBob
25/06/03 10:27 PM
Man, those games used to annoy me. I'm concerned the industry is heading in a direction from which it will never return. One thing is for sure, I'm never selling my collection! *Full Throttle* is more of a third-person adventure game rather than a point 'n' click of old. I loved the original game, what a classic ending! So many funny parts.

Android18a
26/06/03 05:52 PM
To be honest, I'm very sad to see vertical scrolling shmups, traditional 2D platformers and that ilk slowly disappearing. Hence, the GBA is currently my favourite console, and the Dreamcast was pretty fantabulous as well. Of course, I just prefer older-style games all round. *Super Metroid* and *Metroid Fusion* are, in my humble opinion, far better than *Metroid Prime*.





14/08/03